

# Nantucket Land Bank SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



*Photo by Bill Hoenk*

Conservation,  
recreation, and  
agriculture for the  
benefit of the public  
in perpetuity.

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In 1850, there were more than 100 farms on Nantucket. Today, there are less than 20. As part of the Land Bank’s mission, we are committed to supporting local agriculture for the benefit of the public now and into the future. This is one of the reasons why the Land Bank purchased Mt. Vernon Farm in 1997, to preserve a historic farmland property.

Mt. Vernon Farm has been in agricultural use for over a century. We see records of it in the Inquirer & Mirror as early as 1915. The newspaper advertisements paint a vivid picture of what farming and life was like back then, and there are parallels to the resurgence of farm culture on island today. For example, Wallace Gardner, and the other Mt. Vernon farmers who followed in his footsteps (including our present day farmers), advertised their Hummock Pond Road farm stand where locals could purchase spinach, lettuce, radishes, parsley... the list goes on. They also held workshops which bear a distinct resemblance to the Sustainable Nantucket classes offered today. And finally, our current farmers had to withstand the coronavirus pandemic, whereas the farmers of the 1900s had to navigate the Spanish flu and tuberculosis – at one time, Mt. Vernon Farm’s herd had “the only safe milk on the island”. The historical resilience of farmers on this property mirrors the commitment of growers there today who are dedicated to strengthening and revitalizing agriculture on Nantucket.



*Inquirer & Mirror (1983)*



*Nantucket Historical Association (1979)*

MOUNT VERNON FARM

AYRSHIRE MILK

Best for children. Herd tested by Federal Board of Tuberculosis Eradication and has just passed the sixth clean test. The only safe milk on the island.

Fancy milk-fed Broilers and Roasting Chickens.

Choice Vegetables in season.

Prompt Delivery

Telephone 57-3

*Inquirer & Mirror (1924)*

Today, the Land Bank leases 7+ acres at Mt. Vernon Farm to Sustainable Nantucket for their mentor farming program. Sustainable Nantucket's mission is focused on building a more locally-sourced and self-reliant food system on the island, which not only adds to the local economy but also contributes to a healthier community. The acreage at Sustainable Nantucket is currently home to Fog Town Farm, Washashore Farm, and Eat Fire Farm, among other smaller cultivators .

But the work is never done! The Land Bank continues to be focused on expanding opportunities for local agriculture as the island evolves and as additional farmland becomes harder and harder to come by. For example, the Land Bank recently issued a Request for Responses seeking farming proposals for the remainder of the Mt. Vernon Farm property and was happy to receive a collaborative proposal from Fog Town Farm (Aidan & Natasha Feeney), Washashore Farm (Dan Southey), Eat Fire Farm (Dylan Wallace & Caroline Borelli), and The Secret Farm (Dean Long). The farmers have big plans for this land – they hope to use the additional space to expand upon their existing farm businesses, translating into a greater abundance of vegetables, perennial fruits, flowers, and potentially the addition of grain production! We are in the process of developing individual licenses for these farmers, so stay tuned for more updates. Please help us support agriculture on Nantucket by buying local whenever you can!



*Photo by Bill Hoenk*



# From Plastic to Pallets: The Impacts of Marine Litter & How You Can Help

While Nantucket is known for its pristine beaches, our shorelines are increasingly vulnerable to marine litter. When living on an island, it's important to understand the threats posed by marine litter, and the steps we can take as citizens to help keep our beaches clean and safe.

**Marine litter** (also known as marine debris) is defined as “any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment” ([UNEP](#)). Marine debris washes ashore on Nantucket through littering, sewage, stormwater, winds, and ocean currents, to name a few examples. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([NOAA](#)), “Some of the most common and harmful types of marine debris include plastic, such as cigarette butts, plastic bags, and food wrappers, and derelict fishing gear.” Marine litter threatens not only our **wildlife** and their habitats, but also human **health** and our **economy**.

## Wildlife Impacts

Marine wildlife, including fish, sea turtles, and seabirds, can become **entangled** in items such as fishing line or six-pack rings, and they can ingest plastic litter, both of which can lead to injury or death ([NOAA](#)).

Marine debris disrupts habitats in a variety of ways, such as **smothering** important vegetation and thereby preventing it from getting nutrients for survival ([California Coastal Commission](#)).

Lastly, marine litter carries wildlife and vegetation to areas where they can spread and become **invasive species**, disrupting the ecosystem and the species that depend on it ([NOAA](#)).

## Human Health Impacts

Nails, glass, and other litter can injure beachgoers, and when trash enters our waterways, it negatively impacts water quality by adding pathogens and harmful chemicals. Microplastics make their way through the food chain and are now being found in human diets via fish and shellfish ([California Coastal Commission](#)). According to [National Geographic](#), “When researchers from Johns Hopkins looked at the impact of eating seafood contaminated with microplastics, [they found] the accumulated plastic could damage the immune system and upset a gut's balance.”

## Economic Impacts

While the extent of economic impacts is not known, a study funded by NOAA found that reducing marine debris in coastal environments resulted in increased recreational value, tourism spending, and jobs, while the inverse was true when doubling the amount of marine debris ([NOAA](#)). Click the image to the right to see the results of this study.

## The Economic Impacts of Marine Debris on Beaches

The NOAA Marine Debris Program funded a study with Abt Associates to better understand the economic impacts of marine debris on beaches. The results of the study showed that the varying amounts of marine debris on beaches can have an impact on the number of days visitors spend on those beaches, resulting in changes to the amount of tourism dollars spent, the number of local jobs, and the value of beach recreation.



### Eliminating Marine Debris

#### Orange County, California

↑ 2.1 million visitor days  
↑ \$130 million in recreational value  
↑ \$187 million in tourism spending  
↑ 1,900 jobs

### Doubling Marine Debris

↓ 4.6 million visitor days  
↓ \$275 million in recreational value  
↓ \$414 million in tourism spending  
↓ 4,300 jobs

#### Coastal Ohio

↑ 2.8 million visitor days  
↑ \$88 million in recreational value  
↑ \$217 million in tourism spending  
↑ 3,700 jobs

↓ 2.8 million visitor days  
↓ \$84 million in recreation value  
↓ \$218 million in tourism spending  
↓ 3,700 jobs

#### Coastal Delaware & Maryland

↑ 478,000 visitor days  
↑ \$20 million in recreational value  
↑ \$35 million in tourism spending  
↑ 460 jobs

↓ 3.5 million visitor days  
↓ \$141 million in recreation value  
↓ \$254 million in tourism spending  
↓ 3,400 jobs

#### Coastal Alabama

↑ 308,000 visitor days  
↑ \$10 million in recreational value  
↑ \$35 million in tourism spending  
↑ 670 jobs

↓ 1 million visitor days  
↓ \$32 million in recreation value  
↓ \$113 million in tourism spending  
↓ 2,200 jobs

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## From Plastic to Pallets: The Impacts of Marine Litter & How You Can Help cont.

To combat the plethora of threats posed by marine litter, the Land Bank is committed to taking action to keep our beaches and waterways clean. Our staff regularly inspects our beaches for litter, and properly disposes of what they find. Rico Schraff, the Land Bank's Property Steward, explains that plastics are the main problem we see (e.g. balloons, plastic coffee cups) and it's "a constant battle to keep [plastics] off the beach." Beach fire remnants are another common issue, specifically when pallets are used for firewood. There are 80-100 nails in each pallet, and 10-15 pallets are typically used in these beach fires, which results in over 1,000 nails left on the beach from a single fire. We often find glass in the beach fire detritus as well. Our staff removes the marine litter they find to ensure that people, their dogs, and marine animals don't get injured.

That said, the Land Bank can't solve this problem alone! There are many ways in which proactive citizens can help improve the problems associated with marine litter. Below are just a few ideas of how you can help:

- Pack in and pack out (i.e., don't litter). Please don't leave your trash on Nantucket's beaches, streets, or in bodies of water. Always pack and carry out any waste and dispose of it properly.
- Participate in litter cleanup programs, such as the [ACK Clean Team](#)'s weekly clean ups, or the annual [Nantucket Litter Derby](#). Or, organize your own event with friends or family!
- Vote! At a 2018 Special Town Meeting, Nantucket citizens voted to adopt a bylaw banning certain single-use plastics from commercial sale or distribution to reduce litter and protect Nantucket's single-source aquifer, marine life, and more. Advocating and voting for bylaws like this are crucial in the effort to solve the marine litter problem.
- Reduce your own plastic waste by upgrading to reusable straws, water bottles, and grocery bags.
- If you'd like to have a beach fire, do so responsibly. Use non-treated wood without nails in it. Keep your fire on the sand, and away from vegetation. Don't leave broken glass or other litter in the fire. Lastly, let your fire burn out completely before abandoning it and do not smother it under sand (fire smolders longer under sand, and becomes an unseen hazard).
- Help educate others - share this article with your friends and family to spread the word!

Thank you for helping to keep Nantucket's open spaces clean for all to enjoy!





# Summer Highlight: A Partnership with Inclusive Work Opportunities Nantucket

This summer, the Land Bank was proud to partner with the Inclusive Work Opportunities Nantucket (IWON) group alongside the Town of Nantucket and the Nantucket Land & Water Council! IWON (formerly known as the Community Cleanup Crew) takes on a variety of projects to support our island community, including litter clean ups, landscape work, trail work, and office work.

The Land Bank staff worked with the IWON group every Thursday this summer to accomplish essential landscaping, property management, and administrative tasks. IWON's Supervisor & Job Coach, Nora Harrington, shared that "working with the Land Bank this summer was fantastic! They had us do a variety of projects including landscaping at the Millbrook Heritage Orchard and the Creeks Preserve supporting the efforts to weed out the invasive species on the island, trash pick-ups on some of the local trails and beaches, and scanning of official documents." Not only did the IWON students spend time beautifying our parks and trails, but they also scanned a total of four years' worth of public transfer documents – a laudable accomplishment and a significant benefit to the Land Bank!

However, the value of this program doesn't end there. Nora explains that "for many of our group, this was their first official job, and the Land Bank staff did an excellent job at explaining the different projects while being understanding and compassionate of different learning styles, and everyone enjoyed themselves while developing a diverse set of skills that they can take with them into the future". The Land Bank is grateful for this opportunity to partner with IWON and are pleased to share that together we accomplished more than we could have hoped for this summer! Beyond the group's productivity, getting to know all the students was the most gratifying part for our staff – each young adult brought their own unique perspective to their role.

Thank you to the IWON students, Nora Harrington (IWON Supervisor & Job Coach), and Josh Malinsky (IWON founder) for their support this summer!



## Staff Spotlight: Rico Schraff

Since 2016, Rico has worked as the Land Bank's Land Steward, keeping our properties pristine! As we reflected on marine litter issues in this newsletter, we wanted to sit down with Rico to learn about his experience on our beach properties, and to hear about his background and time at the Land Bank!

### **Tell us about your background.**

I was born in New Jersey, but grew up in Wilton, CT. I went to Michigan State University and played D1 lacrosse there, and I got a forestry and environmental education degree. From there I went to Atlanta, Georgia, and started playing music for four or five years before heading out west to eventually do what I ended up doing for 18 years of my life before coming to the Land Bank, which was fighting wildland forest fires.

### **What led you to environmental work?**

I was always attracted to the outdoors. I guess I've always been a steward of the land in some respect, as far as picking up [trash] along the beaches. A lot of it probably started with growing up on this island in the summers. My father had good ethic about picking up [litter] even if it wasn't yours. So, that was inspiring and led me into forestry and just being a steward of the land.

### **When did you start working for the Land Bank and what drew you to work here?**

I'd been opening and closing the summer house that my parents own out here, and at the same time I'd looked into the possibility of helping out with the prescribed burns on the island with the Land Bank. I ended up working for them doing the prescribed burns before the full-time job opening occurred. I applied for that and was lucky enough to get [the job]. I started in 2016.

### **How would you describe your role & responsibilities?**

I'm the Land Steward for the Nantucket Land Bank and my primary responsibilities are to ensure that the properties are safe, accessible, and clean.

### **What is the most interesting thing about your work for the Land Bank?**

The summers. We have this John Deere Gator I get on and I run the beach from Cisco all the way down to Surfside. We also [monitor] 40th Pole. I check for litter, which is a constant battle to keep off the beach. It's not just garbage that we get; we also get marine strandings on occasion. They don't happen very often, but it's nice to be a first responder when it does. To be able to call the Marine Mammal Alliance and help them with getting animals back to safety, or sometimes doing a necropsy... it's probably the most interesting aspect of my job.

### **What project are you most proud of completing?**

The coolest project I've helped with was putting together the Settler's Landing platform viewing deck. It's accessible to the public and it's handicap accessible, which is really neat because I see a lot of people that can't get on the beaches with the soft sand.

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

Well, it's Settler's Landing! Because of the sunsets and because I was a West End kid. I did a lot of growing up on Madaket Harbor. We could ride bikes to the harbor to catch eels and go fishing, so Settler's Landing has a special place in my heart.

