

**CAPE COD TIMES Editorial: New Family Tradition?
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As with virtually every other natural resource, undeveloped land on Cape Cod becomes a rarer commodity with each passing year. Various local conservation trusts have worked diligently over the years to purchase parcels as they became available, and have been especially attentive to cobbling together environmentally sensitive property.

Now the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts is working with the Cape Cod National Seashore to promote a new initiative that will hopefully save even more environmentally-sensitive land. The goal is to rally property owners within the boundaries of the Seashore to set aside undeveloped acreage so that it is protected in perpetuity.

The boundaries of the park surround 44,000 acres, but the Cape Cod National Seashore owns only about 27,000 of those acres. The balance is owned by area towns, nonprofit organizations, and 600 private property owners.

Over the years, some of these owners have worked with the Seashore and the Trust to help maintain the pristine nature of this national park. A handful of these owners are featured in a new video and brochure produced by the Trust to encourage others to follow their lead.

The effort is crucial for many reasons. Although some owners have had the foresight to work as part of a collaborative community, not everyone has been amenable to ceding their property rights. Some owners have, over the years, built huge houses on their land. Although they are usually within their legal rights to construct such structures, these owners inevitably diminish the overall landscape.

Working with the Trust and Seashore, these 600 owners are in a unique position to make a lasting contribution, not only to the overall integrity of the Seashore, but to our collective environmental future. By agreeing to preserve their land, they are providing a gift that will benefit generations to come. In addition to maintaining the natural beauty of this unspoiled setting, every piece of preserved land helps to ensure that wildlife, both endangered and otherwise, may be a little less at risk.

Property owners need not go away empty handed if they decide to help preserve the future. The Compact reports that there are various tax benefits available, including a new state income tax credit of as much as \$50,000 if a land owner works with a local conservation trust. The Compact is also launching a new education effort with the Seashore in the form of a brochure and video, reminding would-be conservationists that donation is only one of a couple avenues that they can take to protect and preserve their property.

Obviously, not everyone is altruistic at heart. Some will argue that, as owners, they have the right to do whatever they want with their property, and to a degree, they are right. However, even the most self-centered of owners must admit that these properties have a fundamental value because of their location. Everyone, including these owners, has a vested interest in seeing that location remain as pristine as possible.