

forest, field & shore



Treaty Rock Farm, Little Compton © Anne Wells

SAVING THE SAKONNET LANDSCAPE

Over 200 young people gathered at Treaty Rock Farm in Little Compton for "The Next Generation of Conservationists." Looking over protected pastures and cobble beach bordering the Sakonnet River, they learned about "Forest, Field & Shore," a three-year campaign by the Conservancy and its partners to save the natural character of the Sakonnet landscape, which includes Tiverton, Little Compton and part of Westport, Massachusetts.

"The Sakonnet landscape is unique," notes John Berg, Sakonnet Landscape Manager. "The proximity of farmland, deep forest and wild coastal shores, all bordered by two rivers and an ocean, give it a very special character." Focus areas for the campaign include: Tiverton's 2,000 acre coastal forest; Ferolbink Farm at Fogland Marsh; Tiverton Great Swamp, a key source of the Westport River estuary; and the Quicksand Pond watershed, one of the most pristine in New England. Funds raised in the campaign will be used to protect 1,100 acres within these critical areas, and

to manage lands, waters and threatened species throughout Sakonnet.

In addition to their ecological values, conservation areas are "living classrooms where the next generation can learn how to steward tomorrow the land we're protecting today," says Berg. The Sakonnet program has already involved almost 2,000 children, parents and friends in walks at Goosewing beach, kayak trips, and vernal pool visits. A greenways trail system is being created with local partners to expand opportunities for exploring the Sakonnet landscape.

The campaign goal is to raise \$4 million by 2010. This money will in turn attract an additional \$14 million in matching donations from landowners and federal, state, local and foundation funding. The Conservancy's effort to protect Ferolbink Farm is particularly urgent. State and federal funds have already been committed to help purchase the conservation easements that will protect this farm, but if the Conservancy does not have pledges in hand for \$1 million in necessary private funds by the fall of 2008 then the public funding will be lost.

"A compelling aspect of the Sakonnet Campaign is that every dollar that's raised will generate an additional \$3.50 from other funding sources," emphasizes Pam Pomfret, Associate Director of Philanthropy for the Conservancy.

Many of those who attended the event at Treaty Rock Farm are the children of conservation-minded Sakonnet residents and they fondly remember spending their childhoods here. "The careers of this generation are taking them all over the world," observes Pomfret. "Their connection to the Sakonnet area is a touchstone in their busy lives. Conservation is becoming a real intergenerational affair."

The Sakonnet Campaign, which began in July 2007 when Treaty Rock Farm was protected, raised \$2 million in its first year. "Our partnership with local land trusts is at the heart of that success," states Pomfret. The Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, the Sakonnet Preservation Association, the Tiverton Land Trust, and the Tiverton Open Space and Land Preservation Commission are working together to protect ecosystems and open space across town borders. Pomfret also credits the Campaign Committee, made up of both local and seasonal landowners. "The Campaign Committee is passionate about saving the natural character of the Sakonnet landscape before it's too late – and they are determined to make a difference."

The Sakonnet Campaign is part of the Conservancy's Campaign for a Sustainable Planet, a global initiative with the goal of protecting at least 10 percent of the world's major habitat types - forests, oceans and coasts, rivers and lakes, deserts and arid lands, and grasslands - by 2015.