



Sound Waves

A Monthly Newsletter from Save Our Sound

MAY 2026

Alliance News & Notes



We were pleased to kick off the season with a wonderful gathering at **Tugboats at Hyannis Marina** last month. It was a terrific evening, with a strong turnout and the opportunity to reconnect with so many friends, supporters, and members of our community. Events like this are an important reminder of the shared appreciation so many people have for Nantucket Sound—and the collective commitment to protecting it.

We are grateful for the continued support we've received in recent weeks, including several generous contributions and the addition of new supporters and stakeholder organizations to our growing coalition. We have also had the opportunity

to participate in a number of speaking engagements, allowing us to provide updates on the status of Nantucket Sound and share our work with new audiences and expand awareness across the region. This month, we are pleased to be speaking at the **MIT Club of Cape Cod** event in Hyannis. This kind of engagement reinforces the broad base of support behind our mission.



Alliance's Spring Gathering at Tugboats



At the center of that mission is our continued work to secure **National Historic Landmark** designation for Nantucket Sound. This designation represents the highest level of historic recognition in the United States and would provide lasting protection for this nationally significant body of water—ensuring its ecological, cultural, and maritime importance is preserved for generations to come.

As we look ahead to the summer months, we are planning additional opportunities to gather, engage, and expand our outreach throughout the Cape and Islands. If you are interested in joining us at one of our upcoming summer fundraisers, we encourage you to reach out—we would be glad to share more information and have you join us.

Also, if you are interested in having the Alliance attend one of your business, organization, or community group events, we would welcome the opportunity to connect. Please reach out to **Sandy Taylor (sandyt@saveoursound.org)** or call us at **(508) 775-9767** for more information.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and for being part of a community that values and protects Nantucket Sound

Warmly,

Audra Parker, President & CEO

Save Our Sound

Sound Science

Ospreys Return to Nantucket Sound



Each spring, one of the most visible signs of the season arrives over Nantucket Sound as ospreys return from their winter migrations. Now as we enter May, these striking birds have already been reclaiming nests along the Cape and Islands, once again becoming a familiar sight above the water.

Often called the “fish hawk,” the osprey depends almost entirely on healthy coastal waters. Nantucket Sound provides an ideal feeding ground, with abundant fish populations that sustain them throughout the breeding

season. Watching an osprey hover high above the water before diving feet-first to catch a fish is one of the most recognizable sights of spring on the Cape.

Their return is more than seasonal—it’s meaningful. Ospreys were once in steep decline due to pollution and habitat loss. Their recovery reflects improved water quality and stronger environmental protections. Today, their presence is a visible indicator of a healthy and functioning coastal ecosystem.

Protecting Nantucket Sound means protecting the conditions that allow species like the osprey to thrive—clean water, strong fisheries, and balanced habitats that support life both above and below the surface.



Where to Spot Ospreys Around Nantucket Sound



If you're hoping to catch a glimpse, look for ospreys near:

- Coastal marshes and estuaries
- Harbors and boat channels
- Nesting platforms along the shoreline
- Quiet stretches of beach with nearby fishing waters

Early morning and late afternoon tend to be the most active times.



*This month, we put a spotlight on **Mark H. Robinson**. Mark has served as Executive Director of **The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts** since its founding in 1986. He has assisted Cape towns and land trusts in preserving more than 15,000 acres of land since then. A graduate of Williams College and the University of Rhode Island, Mark has served as Chairman of the **Barnstable Conservation Commission**, Vice-Chair and Treasurer of the **Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition**, and Vice President of the **Association to Preserve Cape Cod**. He serves as the Governor's appointee to the **Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission** and is an elected Water Commissioner for the **Cotuit Fire District** and serves as Chairman. The **US Environmental Protection Agency** acknowledged Robinson's work with a lifetime achievement award in 2009.*

1. What does Nantucket Sound mean to you?

I grew up sailing in and out of Cotuit. The Sound is my home water. My father's ashes are scattered there and I hope mine will be too.

2. What are your favorite spots to visit around Nantucket Sound?

My boat is a small keel sloop, a Cape Dory Typhoon. Slow and sturdy, with shallow draft, just right for hopping over Succoneset Shoal on my annual pilgrimage to Edgartown. Often, my return visit starts out with little wind, and I wallow for a while in Edgartown's outer harbor. But I keep my eyes peeled to the west and, sure enough, by noon here it comes, a long north-south roiling on the calm waters and that steady southwest afternoon wind blows in and up. I run back to Cotuit, making up all the "lost" time wallowing. Our reliable southwest breeze is not to be taken lightly; it's our best friend.

3. You've spent decades working in land conservation on Cape Cod. What first inspired your passion for protecting this special place?

I was always a "nature boy" growing up in the suburbs by the Charles River. I only got out on it once, in a leaky rowboat that was hard to row upstream. But each summer we came to the Cape, still pretty rural in the 1960s, and I could explore the woods and old trails to my heart's content. My father taught me clamming for steamers with my hands and for quahogs with my feet, no tools needed! I still do it that way.

Getting out in the landscape and seascape made me appreciate it even more. If you love something, you should want to take care of it. I was lucky to find a way to act on my passion by getting a series of environmental protection jobs for Barnstable County. I prepared the nomination of Waquoit Bay as a state Area of Critical Environmental Concern in 1979. I wrote the first county oil spill response plan in 1980-81, triggered by the Argo Merchant tanker oil spill off Nantucket in 1976. I then chaired the **Barnstable Conservation Commission** at the height of the subdivision boom of the 1980s. I learned that if you really want to protect land, you cannot rely on regulations. There are too many loopholes and the people issuing permits are too variable. The only way to preserve land is to acquire it, by gift or purchase, for open space protection. Every other method is just a hedge against time.

4. Can you tell us a bit about The Compact and your role with the organization?

The Compact is unique—the oldest regional network of nonprofit land trusts in the US. It was a response by Cape Codders to have another way to preserve open space other than relying on the government. Six local conservation leaders agreed to pool meager resources and start a new nonprofit to help all of them do their work. I was in the room taking notes and was asked to be the part-time administrator. In 40 years, we have grown from six groups to 38 groups in our network, land trusts and watershed

associations and, most recently, land trusts run by and for indigenous peoples. I have grown as the staff leader—learning by doing, using gained experience in law, real estate, finance, ecology, and human relations. It is a field with a lot of cross-over knowledges—perfect for an old liberal arts major!

My main focus has been working with private landowners who are interested in preserving some or all of their property for natural resource protection. I help them through the legal process and identify tax strategies to enable them to gain financial rewards for giving something back to nature and society. Collectively, we have preserved more than 15,000 acres on the Cape on the nonprofit side. That's about half the size of the Cape Cod National Seashore. And I get to work with the most positive and active people imaginable!



5. Looking at Nantucket Sound specifically, why is protecting beachfront and bayshore areas so critical right now?

Clearly, access to the shores of the Sound is inadequate. In Cotuit, we have four tiny slices of beach—some only the width of the road leading to it—for people to enjoy salt water. The remainder is private property and one waterfront estate just sold for \$15 million. So, we missed the boat in the last century, failing to acquire enough of our beautiful shorefront for our tourist economy. But I do see in the future an opportunity to "take back the Cape," by buying storm-damaged properties and those threatened by sea level rise

when they become available, and they will—Mother Nature is already deep into her planning for that.

6. What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I love exploring the Cape, whether walking in the woods or "gunkholing," that is, poking my sloop into little coves where I haven't been before. I probably have seen more of the Cape than anyone else, working in all 15 towns for almost 50 years. But I always find something new—the open vault in a Truro cemetery, the eagle's nest at the head of Mystic Lake, a carpet of pink Plymouth gentian on the outskirts of the Hyannis industrial area. In the end, I cannot say that we saved the Cape from over-development. I can say that we preserved enough of the Cape Cod experience to make people still want to come here or stay here. The Alliance's work to keep our special Sound special is part of that effort.



More Pictures from our Spring Gathering



DID YOU KNOW?

Ospreys are one of the only birds of prey that feed almost exclusively on live fish.

Special barbed pads on their feet help them grip slippery fish in flight.