Welcome to the West End!

Today, nearly half of Nantucket is preserved as open space thanks to the combined efforts of several conservation organizations. Vast expanses of this land can be found on the west end of Nantucket. This map is the result of collaboration between the Nantucket Land Bank, Nantucket Conservation Foundation, and Linda Loring Nature Foundation. We hope this pamphlet will serve as a comprehensive guide to these properties and trails.

Nantucket Land Bank

The Nantucket Land Bank (NLB) is a governmental body established in 1983 through a vote of Nantucket citizens. Through a 2% fee on all real estate transactions, the Land Bank is able to acquire land on Nantucket to provide waterfront access, preserve scenic views, protect ecological resources, promote local agriculture, and create outdoor recreational opportunities for all. The Land Bank was the nation’s first program of its kind and continues to serve as a model for other communities today. Our properties range from vast expanses of undeveloped land to small scenic parks in the heart of downtown. The Land Bank is the proud owner of over 3,500 acres, all of which are dedicated to conservation, recreation, and agriculture. For more information, visit us at 22 Broad Street (508-228-7240) or www.nantucketlandbank.org.

Nantucket Conservation Foundation

The Nantucket Conservation Foundation (NCF) is a membership-supported, non-profit land trust founded in 1963 to permanently protect the island’s fragile places for the enjoyment and education of its residents and visitors. Beginning with a single donation of less than one acre of land, the Foundation has since evolved to become the island’s largest landowner, responsible for protecting, managing, and maintaining approximately 30% of Nantucket, or over 9,000 acres of conservation land.

To maintain these unique properties and fulfill its mission, the Foundation focuses on conservation, stewardship, scientific research, education and outreach, property experiences and public service to the community. Foundation properties are open to the public year-round from sunrise to sunset. For more information about the Foundation, please stop by our offices at 118 Cliff Road (508-228-2884) or visit our website at www.nantucketconservation.org.

Linda Loring Nature Foundation

The Linda Loring Nature Foundation (LLNF) is a conservation land trust and environmental education organization. LLNF promotes environmental literacy through research, education, and stewardship of their 275 acre property. The Foundation's property serves as a living laboratory for research and education advancing broad community support and environmental understanding.

For more information about LLNF’s research and education initiatives and public programs, check us out at www.llnf.org or stop by our offices at 110 Eel Point Rd. Trails are free and open to the public up to sun down.

Sanford Meadows

Sanford Meadows is a scenic 165-acre property owned by the Nantucket Land Bank. Once part of a dairy farm (along with NCF’s Sanford Farm), this area has a long history of grazing by sheep and cows, which removed much of the tall, woody vegetation. As a result, this property is now a rolling sandplain grassland, full of sedges, grasses, wildflowers, and a plethora of other herbaceous species. Its two miles of trails are accessible via the parking lot at the intersection of Madaket and Barrett Farm Roads. As you walk the trails, you are sure to see a variety of rare and early successional species. Plants such as little bluebeard, Pennsylvania sedge, goldenrod, dewberry, and various asters bring this meadow to life. To promote the growth of these unique species and maintain this ecosystem, the property is mowed every few years.

To the east this trail connects to NCF’s Sanford Farm property, and to the west, the expansive Head of the Plains.

Head of the Plains

Head of the Plains is a vast region of conservation land, with more than 1,000 acres jointly owned by the Nantucket Land Bank and the Nantucket Conservation Foundation. It contains sandplain grasslands and heathlands, shrub thickets, wetlands, and woodland habitats. Abutting this land to the north and east are the Sanford Farm and Ram Pasture & The Woods properties. Between these properties, visitors can enjoy miles of hiking trails, beautiful views across Clark’s Cove, and spectacular sunsets along the shoreline.

Bordering Sanford Farm to the south are 656 acres of property collectively known as Ram Pasture and The Woods, owned by the Nantucket Conservation Foundation. The majority of this land was purchased in 1971 and was the successful result of the Foundation’s first fundraising campaign. The southern portion of this property contains a vast expanse of globally significant sandplain grassland habitat with many associated rare species.

Sanford Farm

Sanford Farm, owned by the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, is one of the Island’s most productive properties on the island. The site’s 134 acres contain coastal maritime shrublands, sandplain grasslands and heathlands, pitch pine woodlands and shrub swamps that provide habitat for a wide variety of animals and rare plants. Sanford Farm, then operating dairy farm up until the early 1920s. The remains of the silo can still be found on a small hill on the western side of the property.

The property is named for Mrs. Anne W. Sanford, who purchased the land in the 1930s. Mrs. Sanford was one of the Foundation’s earliest and staunchest supporters. Sanford Farm, with the adjacent Ram Pasture and The Woods, contains more than 6.5 miles of walking trails with interpretive signs that identify and explain the different habitats and significant geologic, natural, and historic features found on the property.

Habitat Management

Much of Nantucket’s open space on the West End consists of sandplain grasslands and coastal heathlands. These are globally rare ecosystems, which are home to many early successional plant species. Grasses, forbs, and several rare wildflowers are abundant in these habitats. Without frequent management, these grasslands would undergo succession and be taken over by competitive shrubs and trees. Because of this, conservation properties in this part of the island are managed through a combination of techniques including mowing and prescribed fire.

Natural History

Nantucket was formed by the Laurentide glacier, named for the St. Lawrence region of Canada where it originated. As the glacier advanced to the south, it carried rocks, sediments, and vegetation it encountered along the way. Around 21,000 years ago, the climate started to warm and the glacier began to melt, depositing the material it had carried south. These deposits are called moraines. As temperatures continued to increase nearly 6,000 years ago, sea levels rose between 300 - 400 feet and submerged a large expanse of land. The moraines which remain exposed are the places we know today as the Cape Cod Peninsula, Nantucket Island, and Martha’s Vineyard.

This unique habitat provides nesting and hunting habitat for many different animals, including bird species such as New England bluethroat, sandplain blue-eyed grass, and busby rockrose.
Please Respect Our Open Lands:

- Protect the fragile plants on our dunes, grasslands, and heathlands
- Leave wildflowers for all to enjoy
- Prevent your dog from disturbing wildlife
- Keep vehicles and bikes on well-established roads
- Take your litter home
- Respect private property