



WINDOW ON THE COVE CONSERVATION AREA

■ Introduction

The Town of Orleans purchased this 1.02-acre property from Jane MacGregor Quigley, on December 16, 1987, for \$390,000 in accordance with the recording of the Quitclaim Deed in Book 6067, Page 063.

The funding for this purchase was appropriated at the October 20, 1987 Special Town Meeting under Article 72 : Standing Vote, 266 For, 9 Against, the motion passes with a 2/3 majority, the Board of Selectmen is hereby authorized to acquire by purchase, eminent domain or otherwise for conservation, open space and/or recreational purposes the land situated in the Town of Orleans, on Main Street, known as the Quigley lot, ...more fully described in a deed recorded in the Barnstable County Registry of Deeds in Book 573, Page 206, containing 1.02 acres...

Management

- The Orleans Conservation Commission is responsible for the overall management of the property, including periodically reviewing usage, issues and problems and recommending improvements.
- The Orleans Parks and Beaches Department provides routine maintenance such as mowing.
- The Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services is the state agency that regulates the care and use of land purchased for conservation, open space and recreational purposes.

■ **Site Description**

Window on the Cove Conservation Area provides a sweeping view of Town Cove from Main Street. Pedestrians or motorists can see over the grassy parkland to the extensive marshlands in Town Cove and the distant outlet to Nauset Marsh. The park consists primarily of an open grassy field, which runs from a stone wall that borders the Main Street sidewalk down to Town Cove.



Entrance

Window on the Cove is on 76 Main Street. There is a walkway of gray pavers to the southwest of the property that forms the entrance. The installation of this walkway was supported with Orleans Improvement Society funds. There is approximately 225' of frontage on Main Street and 75' of marshy shoreline on Town Cove.

There is no parking at 76 Main Street but public parking is available nearby next to Liberty Square on Academy Place. There is a pedestrian cross-walk on the corner.

Landscaping



Window on the Cove is maintained as a parkland with a mowed lawn from the low stonewall that sets the property off from the sidewalk to the benches. The walkway of gray pavers allows easy access to the three viewing benches. A brick patio connects the benches.

There is a woody border next to the abutters on either side of the property. The majority of the trees in the border are

black locusts and Norway maples. There are a few native trees including red cedar and oak. The sparse understory contains some invasive species such as bittersweet, multiflora rose and English ivy. The area in front of the benches to the marsh is maintained as a naturalized area with infrequent mowing.

Retention basins

The property at Window on the Cove is down gradient of the considerable storm runoff from the downtown section of Main Street. In 1992, retention basins to filter stormwater were built on the grassy upland southwestern portion of this property. These retention basins capture a projected 10 year storm with an overflow that discharges into the marsh to the north. These basins are cleaned annually by the Highway Department.



Salt Marsh Community

The naturalized area in front of the benches to the marsh is mowed occasionally. In the fall, this grassy area is a tangle of blackberry with asters and goldenrod and the invasive bittersweet. Freshwater comes out through the drainage pipe and promotes the growth of plants that grow in brackish marshes such as narrow-leaved cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) and American germander (*Teucrium canadense*) and the invasive Phragmites before the salt marsh begins.

Following the "Classification of Natural Communities in Massachusetts" the shoreline of this property would be classified as Estuarine Intertidal: Salt Marsh. This property fronts on Town Cove, where it is sheltered from wave action permitting the development of a salt marsh. *Spartina alterniflora* grows along the salt creek areas that are covered daily with the tide. There are large patches of low grasses including *Spartina patens* and *Distichlis spicata* (spike grass) in areas occasionally covered by the tide. Seaside goldenrod, a salt tolerant flower, grows along the shore.

Wildlife

In summer many birds are visible at this site including swallows over the marsh and red-winged blackbirds and catbirds in the cattails. Wildlife that is generally associated with a salt marsh habitat includes many species of birds that forage in salt marshes from sandpipers to the larger wading birds such as herons. In fall and winter short-eared owls, snowy owls and northern harrier, hunt in salt marshes. A few terrestrial mammals such as meadow voles forage in salt marshes but retreat to dryer areas during high tides. Fiddler crabs are a common invertebrate. Associated rare animals include the osprey, and the spartina borer.

■ **Land Uses, Limitations and Prohibitions**

Conservation-managed lands are purchased for a variety of active and passive **recreational uses**.

The area features:

- Bird watching
- Scenic viewing

There are **limitations** on hours of use of the property and use by groups as follows:

- The area is closed from sunset to sunrise.
- Groups of more than 10 people require a permit from the Conservation Department

In addition, certain activities **are prohibited** at all areas under the management of the Conservation Commission, including:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Littering
- Domestic trash disposal
- Unrestrained dogs
- Open fires and cooking
- Storing of small boats
- Erection of tents or camping
- Use of soaps, detergents or shampoo
- Discharge of firearms
- Damaging any structure or landscape
- Harassing wildlife

Recommendation:

Prohibited activities and hours of use should be detailed and an informational sign posted at the area.

■ **Management Issues and Other Recommendations**

Conservation Area Boundary Delineation

The Window on the Cove Conservation Area is currently not well defined where it abuts private property. There is a woody naturalized area between the properties but no boundary markers.

Recommendation: The boundary of the property should be marked in the field with some type of simple, permanent identifying symbols.

Invasive Plant Species and Habitat Restoration

There are many invasive species on this property including Norway maples English ivy and bittersweet in the understory of the woodland border. Norway maples produce deep shade and seed everywhere. There is bittersweet and a few black swallowworts in the naturalized area in front of the benches. A band of Phragmites is growing just beyond the cattails before the salt marsh and Japanese knotweed on the abutters property to the east. When invasive species are removed it is often necessary to replace them with appropriate native species to restore the habitat.

Recommendation: All the bittersweet and English ivy should be cut off the trees and treated. The Norway maples should be gradually reduced and replaced with native trees. Understory grasses and flowers should be introduced into the woodland borders which have little native understory. The woody growth of bittersweet and swallowwort should be removed from the naturalized area. The Phragmites should be eliminated from the salt marsh. Invasive plant management is substantially less expensive and less intrusive when invasions are managed early.

■ **Implementation Actions**

Action Required:

- Maintenance of park areas
- Town budget funding for routine maintenance
- Annual cleaning of retention basins

Party Responsible:

Parks Dept.
TA/BOS
Highway Dept.

