



PAW WAH POND CONSERVATION AREA

■ Introduction

The Town of Orleans acquired the property, referred to as the Paw Wah Pond Conservation Area, from the former owner, Shabib Bin Taimur Al Said, on March 31, 1987 for \$1,600,000 for conservation and passive recreation purposes. The property comprises a 9.3-acre parcel of upland and beach on Little Pleasant Bay and a 2.3-acre salt marsh on Paw Wah Pond, an 8-acre salt pond.

In April of 1987, the Town applied to the National Park Service for federal assistance and received a contribution of \$360,000 from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, as reimbursement towards the purchase of this property. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund's financial participation in the acquisition of this property has the requirement that the property must meet federal guidelines for accessibility by handicapped persons. However, the subsequent purchase of Kent's Point and the facilities at that site fulfilled the Town's obligation to provide handicapped accessibility at a salt water site.

An application for a Self-Help grant from the State had also been submitted in June of 1986, but the application was denied.

In accordance with Book 5653, Page 314 recording of the Order of Taking, the October 15, 1986 Special Town Meeting Article 42 for the Proposed Land Acquisition states: *Standing vote, For 178, Against 58, motion carries 2/3^d that the Town accept and adopt the authorization of the Selectmen to acquire and purchase, by eminent domain, or otherwise, for conservation, open space and/or recreation purposes, the land situated in the Town of Orleans off Kenrick Road ...; together with the forty (40') foot private way...; and a certain parcel of land containing approximately 2.3 acres of salt marsh. (Kenrick Road has been changed to Namequoit Road)*

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 operational maintenance, such as seasonal pruning and cleanup.
- 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

Entranceway

The entrance to Paw Wah Pond Conservation Area is located on Namequoit Road on the first right after the Town Landing on Paw Wah Pond. There is a Conservation Commission sign and a bike rack next to an undefined parking area.

The parking area is at the highest elevation on the property about 45' above sea level. The land slopes downward from this point to Pleasant Bay to the south and Paw Wah Pond to the west. Fronting Pleasant Bay is a steep coastal bank about 10' high with a narrow marsh along the beach. This bank occasionally slumps due to being undercut by wave action. The bank fronting Paw Wah Pond is much higher, 18 – 20', and more gradual with a much wider salt marsh ranging from 20' to 150' along its foot.



The Paw Wah Pond Conservation Area has been developed for public use with several trails crossing from one side to the other of the main trail loop to Pleasant Bay and a further loop extending down and along the beach and returning up a set of timber steps. There is an informational plaque about the salt marsh near the steps. There are several benches and picnic tables arrayed around the property.



Woodland and Salt Marsh

The upland part of this property features a mixed forest community of pitch pine, white pine, and black and white oak. Off the paths the understory is almost impassable with poison ivy, bull briar, and fallen trees. There are also English oaks on this property introduced from early settlers. Some of the white pines are quite large. One is over 2' in diameter and according to a pamphlet written by Mark Robinson for Paw Wah Pond would have been considered a King's tree and saved to make masts. This pamphlet also describes a nearby settlement in 1762 of 64 members of the remnants of the Nauset tribe. Otтинamut was their name for Paw Wah Pond.

According to The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts this woodland would be described as a White Pine-Oak Forest. Pitch pine is also common but few hard woods other than oaks are on this site. There is one chestnut on the border that has produced nuts recently.

Under this classification system the marshland would be described as Estuarine Intertidal: Salt Marsh. Salt marshes form in tidal areas protected from heavy surf and the band of marsh is much wider in the shelter of Paw Wah Pond than in the open Pleasant Bay. *Spartina alterniflora* grows closest to the water between the low and mean high tide followed by the much lower grass community of *Spartina patens* often mixed with *Distichlis spicata* or spike grass. A rush, *Juncus gerardii*, is common on the outer edge. Salt tolerant flowers such as sea-lavender and seaside goldenrod, and succulents such as glasswort, *Salicornia* spp. and saltwort, *Salsola kali*, grow throughout this area. Salt tolerant groundsel shrubs grow at the edge of this zone toward the upland. There is additional marsh to the west owned by the Orleans Conservation Trust.

Birds recorded on this site included many shorebirds: sandpipers, ducks, geese, herons, and upland birds: chickadees, warblers, brown creepers, red-breasted nuthatches. Mammals recorded on this site included chipmunks, grey squirrels, and mice. Birds that commonly nest in White Pine-Oak Forests include eastern wood pewee, red-eyed vireo, brown creeper, hermit thrush, chickadee, and red-breasted nuthatch.

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 Paw Wah Pond Conservation Area also supports a number of water-dependent activities.

The area features:

- Trail walking
- Bird watching
- Picnicking
- Scenic viewing
- Swimming
- Fishing
- Boating
- Canoeing and kayaking
- Shellfishing

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

- The area is closed from 10:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m.
- 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

■ **Implementation Actions**

Action Required:

- Maintenance of parking and walking areas
- Town budget funding for routine maintenance estimated to be \$2,600/year

Party Responsible:

Parks Dept.
TA/BOS