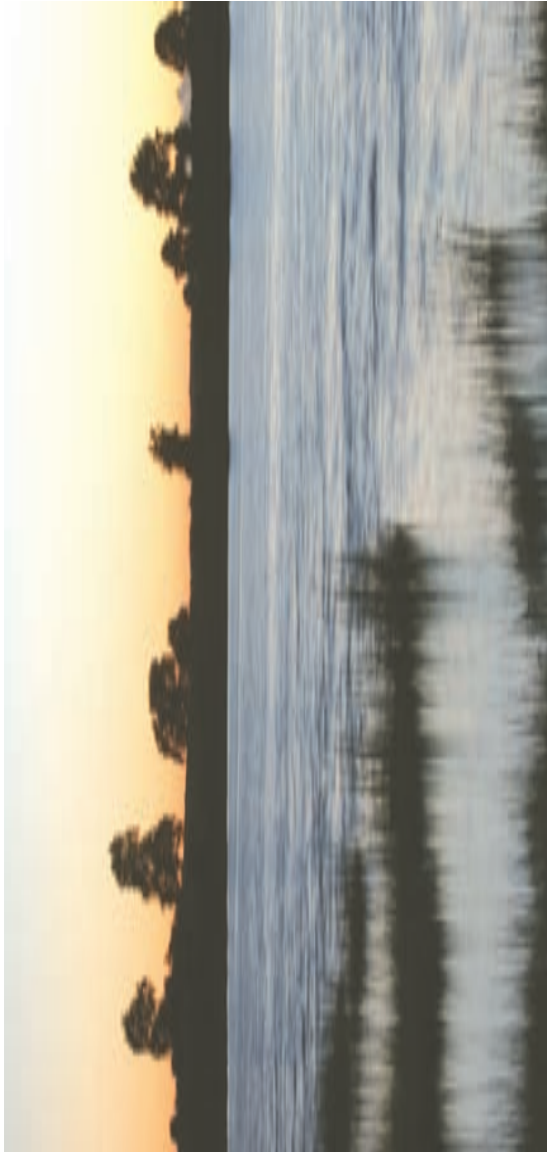


Dumb luck/blind faith



The center of our island, from the Golf Course at the south to the Reservoir at the north, represents almost 1,100 acres of coastal marsh, mature forest, upland pasture, and freshwater wetland. On an island of 6,500 acres, this is a powerful statement.

This greenbelt is the result of 25 years of public effort to erect a protective shield around the various parcels constituting the corridor. In some cases, the shield protected the watershed. In others, such as the Golf Course, Conanicut Island Sanctuary, and Hodgkiss Farm, the shield protected aesthetic and environmental values that would be threatened or lost if the land was developed.



Standing unprotected in this corridor are the Neale, Ceppi, and Dutra farms. It is our dumb luck and good fortune that they remain undeveloped 350 years after our island was purchased. They survive for reasons unrelated to anything we have done. For centuries we benefited from the isolation of an island linked only by ferries. Three generations of Dutras have been good farmers and able to hold onto the land. There are countless other reasons, but these reasons are unrelated to any effort we have made.

We fear that our dumb luck leads too easily to a blind faith that our good fortune will continue forever. Only a blind eye can sustain a blind faith that our small world will not change. Maybe not this year or the next, but there will come a day when our good fortune ends – if we do not act.



P.O. Box 106,
Jamestown,
RI 02835



Middletown's former farms.
Image courtesy Google Earth.

In a chilling front-page article in Sunday's **Providence Journal** (8/19/07), it was reported that New England is losing 167 acres of forest per day to development, and if present trends continue, Rhode Island could shortly lead the nation in the loss of forest. It is possible that by 2050 Rhode Island will be 70% urban. In our own backyard, we have an example of how complacency and a blind eye can transform a beautiful rural community of dairy farms and nurseries into a densely populated suburb. It took a mere 25 years for Middletown to undergo this irreversible transformation.

Middletown (and South County) should serve as a lesson to us that it is only a matter of time before our dumb luck will run out if we fail to shape the future, and we have a unique opportunity at the present time. With \$4,750,000 of help from the federal and state governments and Champlin Foundation, we cannot afford to fail "closing the circle" on 1,100 contiguous acres of protected land in the center of our island. We have raised nearly \$2.1 million dollars toward our goal of \$4 million.

Help us shape the future.

We can protect these landscapes forever with your help. Please send your tax-deductible contributions to the Conanicut Island Land Trust, Save the Farms Challenge, P.O. Box 106, Jamestown, RI 02835.

For more information, please contact Quentin Anthony at 847-1008, Craig Amerigan at 423-3537, Mike Swistak at 294-3304 or Arthur Milot at 423-1858, or visit our website at www.conanicutlandtrust.org



Save the Farms Challenge