

DO YOU HAVE A CONSERVATION VISION FOR YOUR PROPERTY? GREENBELT CAN HELP.



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Protecting land and nature for you, our communities and the future



GREENBELT CONSERVATION CHRONICLE Castle Neck River Reservation | IPSWICH

30 ACRES OF EXPANSIVE VIEWS, HAYFIELDS, WOODLANDS Conservation Priority and Partnerships

Conserving this natural and agricultural resource in Ipswich had been a Greenbelt priority for decades. With wide swaths of prime farmland, wooded upland and trails leading to riverfront and marsh, the Castle Neck River Reservation's diverse landscape represents the best of Essex County. Today, an all-access trail leads visitors from the parking area to a knoll with sweeping views, acclaimed birding and a one-mile loop trail.

In collaboration with the Town of Ipswich and the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, this project is a prime example of the many ways in which Greenbelt works to protect land. After negotiating the right to purchase all of the former Pony Express Farm, Greenbelt then partnered with the Town on their acquisition of 28 acres of land for athletic fields, and with Fisheries and Wildlife on their purchase of 55 acres of tidal riverfront forest and marsh (identified as important climate-resilient land by The Nature Conservancy).



While Greenbelt's Castle Neck River Reservation itself comprises just 30 acres, the overall effort produced a larger and more impactful conservation outcome.

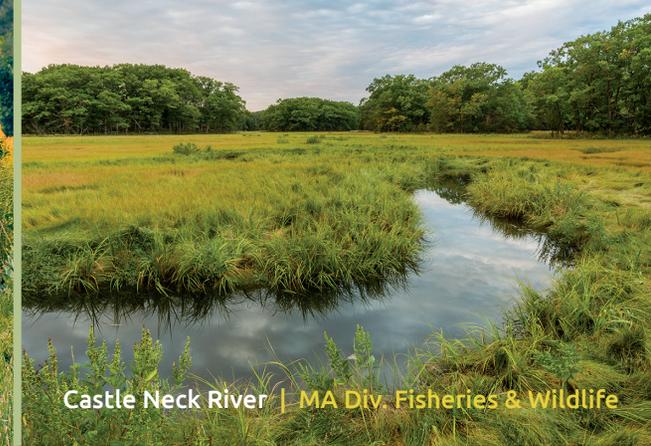


Castle Neck River Reservation | Greenbelt

MARTHA SANDERS

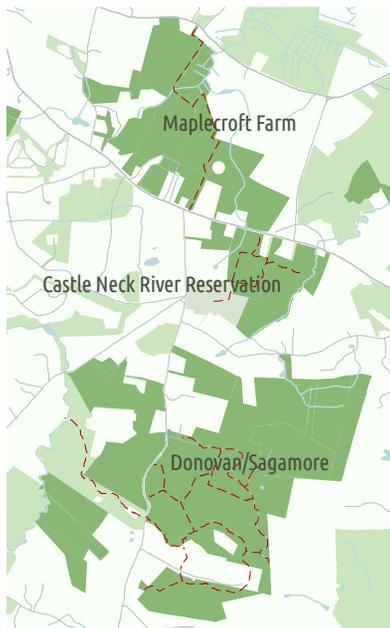


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Castle Neck River | MA Div. Fisheries & Wildlife

JERRY MONKMAN/ECOPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



The Making of a Greenbelt

The Castle Neck River Reservation is nestled within a much broader patchwork of conserved land. Immediately surrounding the reservation are 900 acres of land Greenbelt has helped protect since 2011, most notably Maplecroft Farm to the north and the John J. Donovan Reservation/Sagamore Hill Conservation Area to the south. Taking a bird’s eye view, these 900 protected acres then fit into an even larger context – they are a critical landscape and habitat connector between thousands of acres of forest and farms to the west, and the Great Marsh to the east.

History of the Land

Recorded ownership of what is now the Castle Neck River Reservation dates back to 1636, when it was granted to John Perkins, Sr., Thomas Howlett and John Fawn as part of the “South Eighth” (an original colonial land division of the town). For 240 years, generations of the Brown family owned the land as part of a vast farm that extended south into Hamilton. Beginning in the early 1980s, Robert Daniels owned and operated the land as the “Pony Express Farm” polo training facility.

Clearing the Way for Improved Access

In need of a welcoming entrance to the Castle Neck River Reservation, Greenbelt supporters helped acquire and conserve a small parcel on Rt. 133 with an abandoned building on it. Greenbelt replaced the building with a parking area and an all-access trail to a bench that welcomes visitors with a range of mobilities. At the bench, visitors can enjoy the views and nature, or continue onto the one-mile Greenough Trail that circles the hayfields and connects to the Pony Express recreational fields and trail spurs that lead to views of the Castle Neck River.

“So many things had to fall into place for this project to happen, but the time and effort were really worthwhile. What a gem this place is!”

Kate Bowditch
President

TOOLS

Private, municipal and state funding
Conservation Restriction
Repurposed abandoned lot

OUTCOMES

Expanded conservation corridor
Protected landscape and wildlife habitat
Improved trail access for public enjoyment
Strong conservation partnerships



Pony Express Playing Fields | Ipswich Land



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