

Section A.6. General Project Narrative

Summary

The Trustees is submitting this Notice of Intent and accompanying documents to the Edgartown Conservation Commission in request of an Order of Conditions for an Over-Sand Vehicle (OSV) trail modification at Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge. The Trustees own and manage the property in question. The project involves (Figure 1):

- Approximately 600 linear feet of trail modification to secure resilient, practical OSV access to the popular recreation and fishing destination across from Tom’s Neck (“The Point”),
- Retiring 1,300 linear foot bayside trail that is routinely flooded and salt marsh migration is occurring,
- Nourish the 1,300 linear foot bayside trail with dredge from Cape Poge Bay (completed),
- Plant with American Beach Grass the 1,300 linear foot bayside trail (completed), and
- Plant cedar trees at a 2:1 ratio to replace any needing removal from the 600-foot trail modification.

Background

The bayside trail on the Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge runs from the Dike Bridge up to Shear Pen Pond and provides access to popular recreation and shell fishing sites for the public. Erosion of the bayside dunes has accelerated in recent years, and coupled with sea level rise, it is becoming more difficult to designate a corridor for OSVs that is above the high tide line¹.

¹ Massachusetts Barrier Beach Task Force. 1994. Guidelines for Barrier Beach Management in Massachusetts. P. 88

Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge - Proposed Trail Re-route

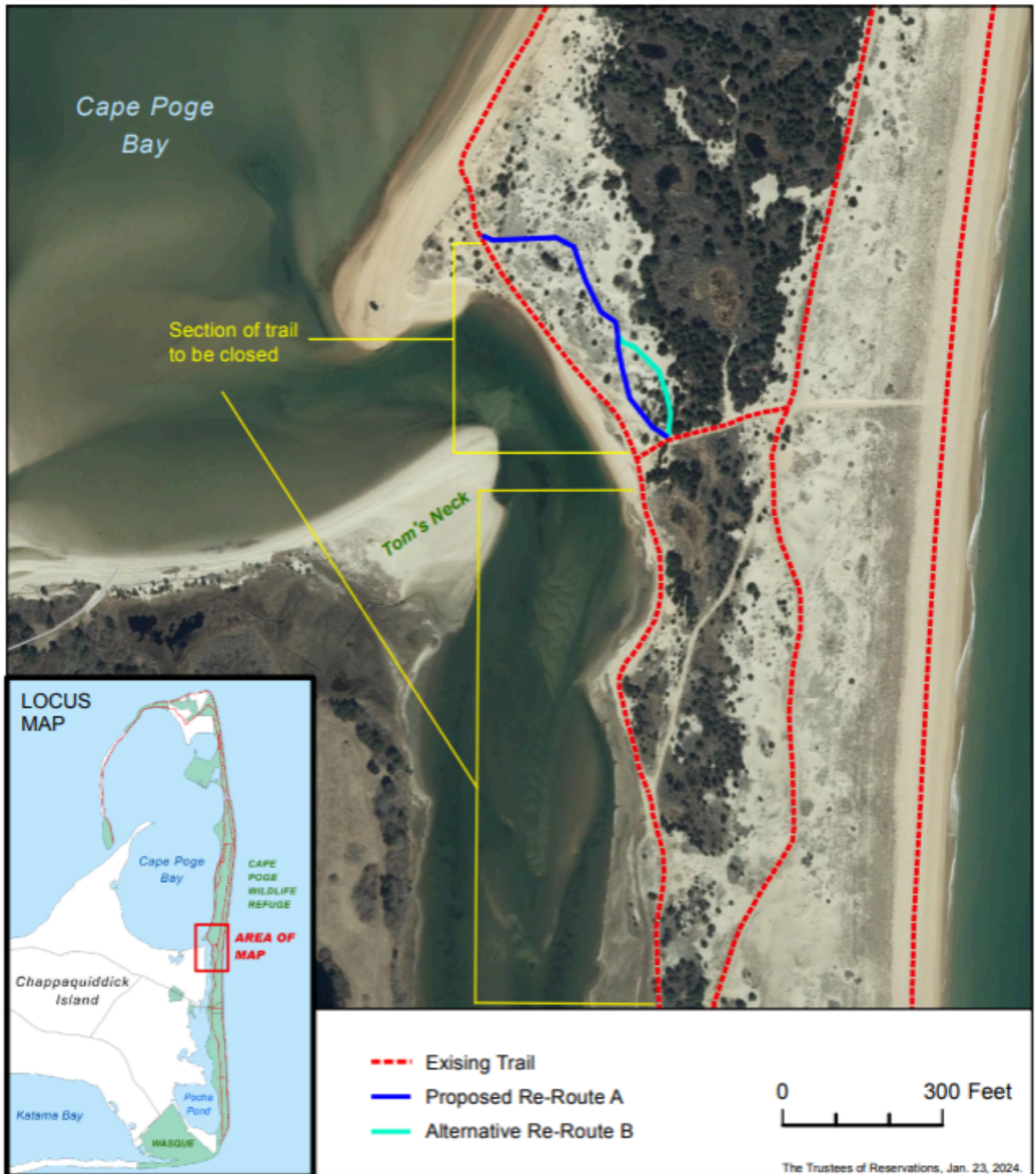


Figure 1 OSV trail modification project map. The project includes a new resilient 600-foot access trail to the Point across from Tom's Neck Point, the retirement, nourishment, and planting of the 1,300 of bayside trail affected by flooding and salt marsh migration, and the replacement planting at a 2:1 ratio of red cedars affected by the trail modification.



Figure 2. Photos of the existing bayside access trail to the Point across from Tom's Neck Point. The trail is routinely flooded and has largely inaccessible to OSV access.

The area across from Tom's Neck ("The Point") is one of the most popular destinations for anglers, shell fishermen, and beachgoers alike providing access to the pristine waters of Cape Poge Bay (cover photo). Loss of access to The Point is nearly absolute as higher tides, astronomical tides, persistent winds, and sea level rise regularly flood the OSV access trail (Figure 2). In recent years, this crossover has become a pathway for flooding and storm surge, and it is becoming more difficult to designate an OSV corridor above the high tide line. The changing climate, and particularly increases in sea level rise, will likely accelerate future erosion at this location and without the proposed OSV trail modification, OSV access to the popular Point will be lost.

In partnership with the Town of Edgartown, The Trustees recently completed a trail nourishment project utilizing dredge spoils from Cape Poge Bay at the mouth of the Narrows. Despite nourishment of trails up to grade (1ft depth), the area still experienced flooding during recent storms in 2024.

Proposed Project Description

To improve beach resiliency and maintain OSV access to The Point as a popular public recreation and fishing area, The Trustees propose an OSV trail modification of the current crossover and to retire a section of the bayside trail. The modified path was chosen to provide the most direct path to The Point from the current crossover over a stable, quiet dune and remove approximately two Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*). The entire proposed path is approximately 600 linear feet with a width no bigger than ten (10) feet (approximately 6,000 cubic feet). The path area occurs in the MA DEP Barrier Beach-Coastal Dune wetland area.

The Trustees will modify the trail for the new access way using a tractor and trail grader. Any Eastern red cedars in the pathway will be removed by chainsaw with bio-oil. All oil changes will occur outside the wetland regulated area. The Trustees will replace any cedars that must be removed for the trail modification at a 2:1 ratio or greater. As a native evergreen, the Eastern red cedar is a tree species of great importance and food resource to local wildlife. The replacement and increase in numbers of this native tree is a critical aspect of the restoration benefit of this project. Specimens planted as replacement will be acquired locally and will be the appropriate size to provide benefits to wildlife and ensure their establishment.

In addition to increasing resilient access to a popular public recreation area, the proposed project is mitigating the dune disturbance by retiring, nourishing, and planting more than twice the length of the new trail modification (~600 ft) through the retirement, nourishment, and planting of 1,300 feet of the bayside trail (Figure 1). The restoration area has already been retired, nourished, and planted and a portion of the path remains open to pedestrian access (Figure 3). The Trustees has also nourished and planted the Old Cedar trail (per SE20-1672) and the crossover from the Inside Trail to the bayside at the project site. Restoration of the bayside trail will increase resilience of the adjacent cedar habitat and reduce erosion impact of OSV access to the surrounding dunes. Additionally, this restoration will ameliorate flood pathways in the area and enable the refuge to remain open more often following storm events.



Figure 3. The retired, nourished, and planted bayside trail within the project area. The bayside trail entrance from the south off the Inside trail (top photo) and the bayside trail from the north adjacent to The Point (bottom photo). The Trustees left a path along the OSV trail unplanted for pedestrian access along the bayside trail area.