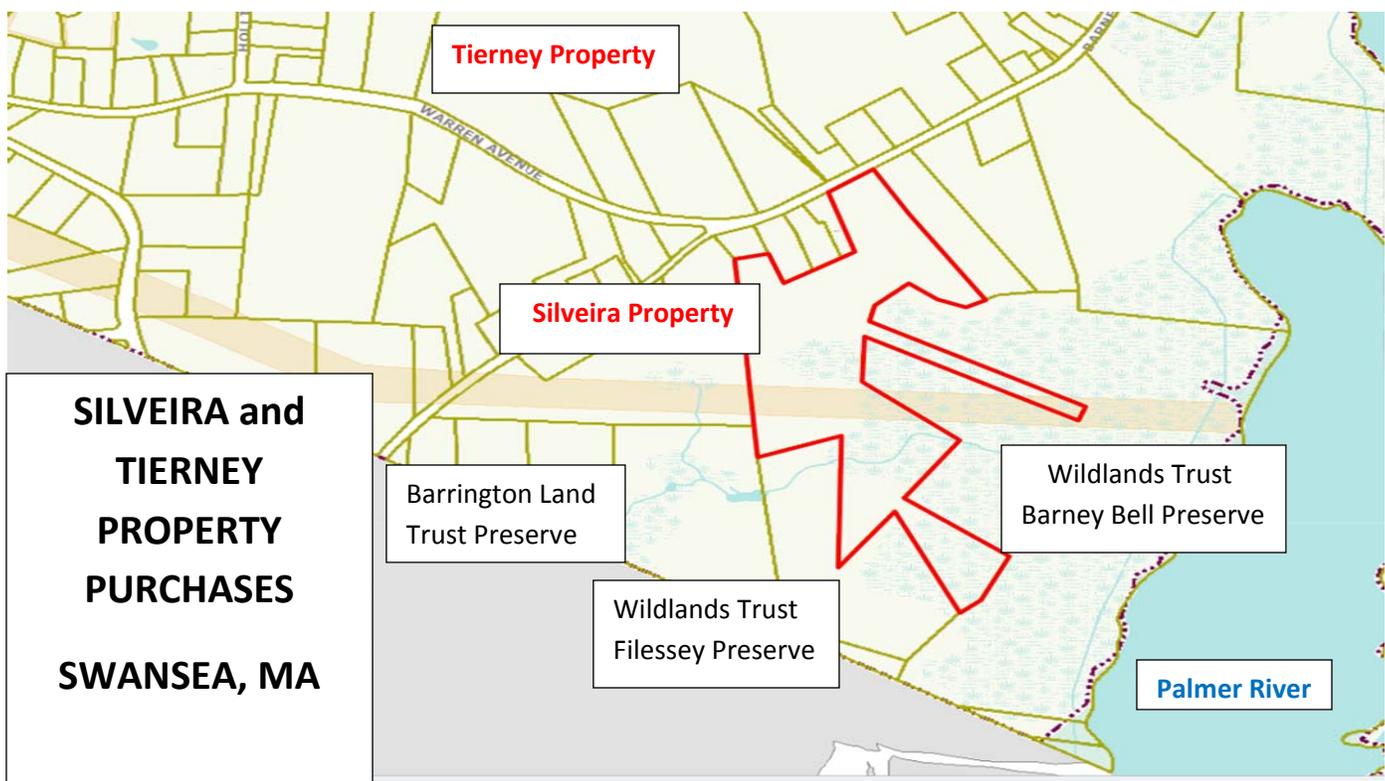


Marsh and Habitat Preservation, Swansea: Conserving Green Infrastructure

Who: The Town of Swansea, The Wildlands Trust, Blount Fine Foods (Fall River)

Where: Barneyville Road, below the Old Providence Road (Miles) Bridge, southwest Swansea, along the Palmer River. The property abuts the Wildlands Trust’s Barney Bell Preserve property, and is in close proximity to the Palmer River and Barrington Land Trust Property.

What: The Town purchased the Silveira property, a 15-acre parcel on Barneyville Road containing a residence, a greenhouse and nursery operation, and vacant land abutting marsh area along the Palmer River. The Silveira property also abuts the Wildland Trust’s 38-acre Barney Bell Preserve, which contains substantial marsh land along the Palmer. The Tierney property is a 22-acre parcel located on the northwest side of Barneyville Road, across from the Silveira property. The parcels are connected by a small stream that flows southeasterly into the Palmer River. Both of these properties, which were subject to development pressure, are part of the Palmer River corridor, an area that has been recognized as a local and regional priority protection goal in a number of planning studies over the years.



When: Town Meeting vote unanimously approved the purchase of the Silveira Property in November of 2015. The Wildlands Trust secured the funds to purchase the Tierney Property in January of 2016.

Why: Major storm events (2010, 2012) have caused damage to the transportation infrastructure bridging and abutting the Palmer River. The damage included collapsed culverts, collapsed pavement, streambank erosion and compromised short span bridges, and local roadway flooding. Flood Inundation Studies, conducted by SRPEDD and Save The Bay (2011, 2012), had recommended preserving marshland at the mouth of the Palmer, as part of its green infrastructure, in order to help dissipate wave energy and storm surge impacts. The acquisition of this land will also allow the marsh to migrate with the predicted sea level rise and increased tidal inundation.

The purchase of these two properties was also a key element in the long-term plan of achieving the protection of all this property for conservation, habitat, and public access purposes.

How: The Town had been working with the property owner and the Barrington Land Trust, dating back to the 1990s, regarding conservation preservation of the Silveira property. The owners worked with the Conservation Agent to put together an agreement for purchase that would allow the property to be protected in perpetuity. Conservation Agent Colleen Brown went to the 2015 fall Town Meeting with a request to spend \$100,000 in Community Preservation funds to acquire the Silveira property.

Shortly thereafter, the Tierney property, which is just across Barneyville Road from the Silveira property, and had been under development pressure for a while, was offered to the town for \$10,000. Because the next Town Meeting would not be held for several months, the Wildlands Trust stepped in and worked with a private donor, Blount Fine Foods, to secure the money to purchase the property and donate it to the town.

Benefits: The social, economic, and environmental benefits of the Silveira and Tierney purchases will include:

- Retention of identified green infrastructure in an area where it contributes to the dissipation of energy associated with storm, extreme tidal, and flood events
- Increased amount of conservation land protected in perpetuity in this area along the Palmer (almost 100 acres in total properties that are contiguous or in close proximity to one another)
- Retention of stream continuity and habitat connectivity between parcels in a coastal river corridor
- Eliminated threats to water quality due to development in an area of the river below the desalination plant intake
- Preservation of historically significant land in an area that was the “birthplace” of Swansea and the site of the beginning of King Philip’s Wars