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June 12, 2020

Cindy Gould, Secretary  
Little Compton Beach Commission  
Little Compton Town Hall  
40 Commons  
Little Compton, Rhode Island 02837

[southshorebeach@gmail.com](mailto:southshorebeach@gmail.com)

re. Goosewing Beach Management Agreement 2020

Dear Cindy,

We understand you are the Beach Commission's preferred point of contact for The Nature Conservancy. Would you please share this letter with its members. The past few electronic public meetings have not lent themselves well to adequate discussion on topics of mutual concern, so we write this letter in anticipation of the correspondence we are expecting from the Beach Commission. It is a response to what your key concerns may be and to set the record straight on our behalf.

Before we get to the concerns of the Beach Commission, here are a few key points from our perspective at The Nature Conservancy:

The Conservancy appreciates the recreational oversight and visitor safety services provided to Goosewing by the Beach Commission and its manager, and our managers have relied on direct access to Goosewing over the years by way of South Shore beach.

Events of the past months have been challenging, but then every season delivers its challenges to us. Our Goosewing staff were surprised to be intentionally locked out of South Shore yesterday morning, not an insurmountable challenge, but a sign the Conservancy perceives as that of an eroded working relationship.

Looking back, Goosewing was appreciated 30 years ago for its unspoiled nature by a number of Little Compton residents who formed a coalition and reached out to The Nature Conservancy to help save Goosewing from the uncertain future of an impending sale. It was an arduous challenge but in 1989, the coalition got what they wanted, a quiet place for people and nature by the sea.

Managing for shorebirds, dune grasses, marine life and all the things that make for a healthy ecosystem here has been the Conservancy's goal ever since, even if some of the rules make us unpopular among some visitors.

It's simple, really. The beach strand at Goosewing is  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long and 75' wide, which is about the size of Veteran's field in Little Compton. Accommodating 1,000 visitors here on a summer day without suffering permanent damage to this wild place simply can't happen unless rules are followed. We can understand push-back from the occasional visitor, but we expect our long-term management partners to be on board with protection of this unique ecosystem.

To put this in perspective, this shared effort is preferable to the outcome at Moonstone Beach which was entirely closed to the public when its ecosystem became threatened after inadequate management actions.

The Nature Conservancy manages over 10,000 acres in preserves all over Rhode Island for people and nature. Goosewing is by far our greatest challenge, demanding much more in staff and expense than any other preserve we own. To be clear, it is a financial stretch for us to afford this management every year.

That said, the Conservancy's responses to our anticipated concerns of the Beach Commission include the following:

Goosewing Management Agreement - The Nature Conservancy will execute this agreement as-is for the coming season. We will forward a signed, hard copy to you in time for the next meeting of the Beach Commission, which we anticipate as June 23.

This document has underwritten the Conservancy's working relationship with the Beach Commission with hardly a revision since it was implemented more than 25 years ago. We believe this document needs to be updated given the changes to how this beach is now used by visitors. This fall, we would be happy to meet to discuss or provide a revised draft Management Agreement.

CRMC Maintenance Assent for Manual Breaching - We have notified CRMC of the Beach Commission's wish to have the outlet at Tunipus, aka 'first creek', removed from this Assent, and will take the steps necessary to have this permit rescinded.

For the record, we had asked CRMC to include this area in the Conservancy's renewed 10-year Assent for the outlet at Quicksand, aka 'second creek', thinking this would spare the Town effort, especially as our arrangement with RIDEM allows for this work to be performed at no cost, with the knowledge we would not move to perform any breaching at Tunipus without full agreement from the Town (as occurred last year), and because 'first creek' is located entirely within the tax parcel which is owned by The Nature Conservancy. This seasonal activity has been key to maintaining herring populations in the coastal watershed which lies to the north of Goosewing.

Evening management of visitors - The Nature Conservancy fully appreciates the measures taken by the Town to keep both beaches safe during the pandemic. There may be value to having a staffed presence at the entrance to South Shore in the evening, and we appreciate the opportunity for a trial. This is the type of action we had encouraged the Commission to consider in a letter sent earlier this year. As long as this staff presence would include monitoring and enforcing the rules on Goosewing, too, we would be willing to cost-share for that expense.

We hope the Beach Commission appreciates the timeliness of this reply. We are glad to discuss any of these points further and look forward to attending the Commission's next public meeting. In the meantime, it would be helpful if access were restored to our Goosewing staff. Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Berg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Berg  
Sakonnet Landscape, Program Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeanne Cooper', with a long horizontal flourish.

Jeanne Cooper  
Carter, Tillinghast & Shorebird Program  
Manager

cc. Little Compton Town Council