Past and Future on Martha’s Vineyard
“This variety attracts an extraordinary mix of citizens. One of Massachusetts’ two Indian towns is at the west end of the island, one of America’s first and most exclusive yacht clubs at the east, and in between, a community frequently cited as the only middle-class black seaside resort on the East Coast. There is as impressive a collection of powerful, important, and influential members of the Establishment as can be found in any one place; there is a burgeoning enclave of its young radical counterparts. There are descendants of Portuguese pioneers who came from the Azores and Cape Verde Islands on whale ships. There are new Vineyarders who have migrated to start a business or to retire in one of the three more urban down-island towns, there are New Englanders whose ancestors were the first white settlers here, whalers, fishermen, farmers, whose names still dominate up-island villages as well as the streets and stores of the towns.”

Anne Simon, 1974. *No Island is an Island*
Areas of Concentrated Native American Activity

- Freshwater Wetland
- Saltwater Marsh
The 1850 Landscape

Fences of stone or wood

Ancient Woodlands

“There is room for no more people on Martha’s Vineyard”
1798 Account
Nature’s resilience = Society’s Natural infrastructure

- 1850 building
- woodland
- Farmland/open

- developed
- secondary forests
- ancient woodland
- openlands (active agriculture, grass types, heath, shrublands, old fields)
The Fate of the Vineyard’s Ancient Woodlands

- Conserved Ancient Woodlands
- Unprotected Ancient Woodlands
Environmental Quality of Vineyard Watersheds

- **Unknown**
- **Good**
- **Somewhat Impaired**
- **Impaired**

Declining Quality

- **Buildings**
- **Watershed Drains Directly to Ocean**

Map showing various vineyard watersheds with different quality levels.
The Need to Plan and Conserve Island-wide

“By the time strong county-wide or regional government with sufficient powers to deal effectively with the developer is created, Martha probably will have been raped. This was certainly the case in Long Island, Staten Island, along the New Jersey coast, and Cape Cod, where attempts to protect the environment and improve the year-round economy were found to be largely ineffective on a town by town basis.”

Metcalf & Eddy *Comprehensive Plan*  1971

“Preserving the Island’s character is vitally important for the visitor-based economy. The natural environment, the scenic beauty and the simple Island way of life are the engines of our economy and must be carefully protected.”

Mark London, 2003 *Looking at the Commission*
40% of the Vineyard is Conserved

30% is Developed

30% is “Up for Grabs”
“One vast resort from Edgartown to Gay Head”

O.G. Stanley 1887  Developer and Founder of the Tashmoo Springs Water Company
Wildlands & Woodlands
Farmlands & Communities
2019

Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs) in New England

an overview
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• Allen Healy’s indefatigable zeal to farm the entire island and link conservation and agriculture