

Crowley land added to Barn Island preserve - The acquisition adds 48 acres of unspoiled marshland.

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STONINGTON - Connecticut's largest coastal wildlife management area has just gotten a little bit larger. In front of a standing-room-only crowd at the La Grua Center Thursday morning, officials announced the acquisition of 48 acres of unspoiled marshland that abuts, and will become part of, the 970-acre Barn Island Wildlife Management Area in Wequetequock.

The \$920,000 purchase from Stonington's **Crowley** family was financed mostly through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Long Island Sound Study Stewardship Program Fund.

"This **Crowley** property is an investment that we should be extremely proud of," said Gina McCarthy, commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection. "It is not overpriced."

McCarthy praised the property for the depth of its biodiversity. It's home to 35 different state-listed species, which are either endangered, threatened, or species of special concern. Four of those species are also federally listed, she said.

"I think it's sort of the biodiversity that blows me away," she said.

The purchase also allows the state to continue the research it has conducted since it acquired its first Barn Island parcel in the 1940s. David J. Kozak, a coastal environmental planner with the state, said the research continually examines the marsh's response to having the tidal flow restored. When the state first acquired the land, a series of man-made dykes separated the marsh from the tidal waters of Little Narragansett Bay. The flow of water was eventually restored by adding culverts to the dykes, and the state has been studying how the marsh is responding ever since.

The event, filled with officials, environmentalists, and members of the extended **Crowley** family, had its share of lighter moments.

McCarthy noted that she was speaking at the site of a rehabilitated

environmental brownfield, the Borough's former Monsanto chemical plant that is now a waterfront residential development and community center. To show her support for brownfield rehabilitation, "I am going to sacrifice and live here this summer," she joked.

After nearly half the room raised their hands in response to state Sen. Andrew Maynard's request for the Crowleys to show themselves, he quipped that "I probably should have asked who's not related to the Crowleys."

And Mark Tedesco of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made the audience practice saying Wequetequock.

The ceremony also had its share of sentimentality, as Michael **Crowley** spoke of the land his family acquired in 1911 and wanted to protect.

"We were taught, even as we were growing up, to protect the land," he said, adding that the land is worth more than the sale price.

The officials who stood in line to praise the acquisition also thanked the various groups and people who worked behind the scenes to make it happen. These included the Stonington Conservation Commission, the Stonington Land Trust, and the late Don Henne of North Stonington, a former project leader at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who championed the Long Island Sound Futures Fund program.

Tedesco said the addition "will provide great value to the public everyday, with no charge and compound interest."

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