

# Another Highway - Another Farm Ripped Up

by Andrea Leonard

Nobody who's passed through Osterville this summer is unaware of the highway construction on South County Road. We all wonder why it was necessary to rip up the pavement on Main Street and West Barnstable Road as an initial step to rebuilding South County Road. We all deplore the road being left in its present deplorable condition for the entire season. Some brave souls venture to travel South County Road and are shocked at the destruction of trees and shrubbery that once made it a gracious and inviting approach to the village.

The damage is done; all we can hope for is an early end to the mess. Because we've an example of the heedless manner in which the Massachusetts Department of Public Works does its business, we are sensitive to other similar disasters. Such a situation exists in another part of Barnstable County; as presently planned by the DPW, the proposed highway construction will effectively destroy (1) a wildlife sanctuary, (2) a farm and cleared cropland, and (3) wetlands and swampland. Those of us with concern for protecting and preserving the fragile natural environment of Barnstable county are asked to lend support to the farm owners currently embroiled in battling the state DPW.

I'm talking about the Route 25 extension through the Town of Bourne to the Bourne Bridge. The DPW proposes to cut a highway through Grazing Field Farm, most of which lies within Barnstable County. The road, as laid out by the DPW, will pass through a fenced wildlife sanctuary, cross wetlands and swamps and come within 500 feet of the farm center.

An alternate upland route has been proposed by the owners of the farm, but in spite of the endorsement of that alternate by the Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs as well as its endorsement by the Commissioner of Food and Agriculture, the DPW has refused to consider seriously the alternate. It has, in fact, refused to permit federal agencies, agencies with specific environmental expertise and with legal mandates for the protection of just such natural resources, even to consider the alternate proposal.

An environmental Impact Study raised serious questions that have never been satisfactorily addressed; these include the serious and unnecessary risk to municipal water supplies. The wetland in question lies well within the cone of depression of Bourne's town wells and the highway could have a significant damaging effect on local water supplies and quality.

Ecologically concerned residents of Barnstable County are aware that wetlands act to absorb spring floodwaters and release them slowly through the rest of the year, thereby replenishing groundwater supplies as they are depleted in drier seasons. The process removes potentially harmful concentrations of organic and inorganic chemicals from the waters provided to the surrounding aquifer.

The alternate route offered by the owners of the farm allows for a substantial buffer between the highway and the groundwater supply feeding Bourne's wells. Located primarily along a ridge where the depth to the groundwater is greater than 50 feet, the upland alignment would filter salt runoff and other contaminants. Many Massachusetts cities and towns are finding their municipal groundwater supplies polluted by highway related substances. A change, on paper, could prevent that in Bourne.

There are some who believe the owners of Grazing Field Farm object to the DPW's layout because their land will be taken; in fact, more of their land will be taken if the route layout is changed; less damage to the delicate environment would be done, however, if the road were built on upland. It is this consideration, not the quantity of land they will lose, which motivates the farm's owners; they are also distressed, and understandably so, by the prospect of losing 10 percent of the farm's cleared cropland. Soils of Barnstable County are notoriously poor and sandy; the soil at Grazing Field Farm has been constantly improved for over fifty years. Losing 10 percent of it is no small matter.

The DPW argues its proposed route has strong public support, yet the public has not been offered the opportunity to consider the alternate proposed by Grazing Field Farm. The Buttermilk Bay community was presented two or three alternatives; all but the DPW's present alignment would have destroyed homes, commercial properties, land and recreation

values and other natural resources; the public understandably favored the route that curved behind Buttermilk Bay through undeveloped land.

Can residents of Barnstable County lend support to Grazing Field Farm to protect wetlands, productive croplands, water supplies and a wildlife sanctuary? Indeed we can. Two letters of support are needed.

One must be sent to Washington to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) which has the power to back up the Environmental Protection Agency's request that the alternate be considered in a supplementary Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

This is extremely important. The letter should be addressed to Mr. Michael Kane, Council on Environmental Quality, 722 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20006, supporting the alternate route proposed by Grazing Field Farm and requesting the CEQ to seek a supplemental EIS.

The second letter should be addressed to Mrs. Hope Ingersoll, Grazing Field Farm, Bay End, Buzzards Bay, Mass., 02532, and a copy of your letter to Mr. Kane should be enclosed. Your letter to Mrs. Ingersoll should state your support of the alternate route and your reasons. It is necessary for Grazing Field Farm to document public support and opposition to the DPW's present plan.

In addition to this call for individual support, it seems appropriate to ask the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod and the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History to lend their weight in this effort. Here we have these fine organizations dedicated to protecting and preserving our environment. Let them join us in coming to the assistance of a beleaguered farm threatened with destruction and depopulation at the hands of our own government. Concerted effort on the part of organizations, associations and individuals will be required to overcome inexorable power, political power, power that must respond to many voices, but that can ignore with impunity the cries of the few.

That Route 25 is destined for completion is not the issue; the issue is the path the highway will take when the connection is finally made with the Bourne Bridge. We can help to determine that path and how much damage the roadwork will do in the building. Please write those two letters. And, if you have influence with other politically powerful people, please solicit their support as well.

All it takes is a good look at South County Road and a little imagination to recognize what devastation Route 25's extension will inevitably bring to Grazing Field Farm if the DPW's plan is carried out. Public support and public outcry can prevent that devastation.

Write those two letters -- today.



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letter to editor  
save letter  
for Andrea

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September 17, 1979

12/16/82

To the Editor  
The Village Advertiser  
West Bay Road  
Osterville, Ma. 02675

Association supports efforts  
to save Caom

Dear Editor:

We wish to congratulate Andrea Leonard for her article, "Another Highway - Another Farm Ripped Up", concerning the proposed implementation of Route 25 which would cut a highway through Grazing Fields Farm and pass through a wildlife sanctuary, wetlands and swamps.

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We note that the article said, referring to support for an alternate upland route that has been proposed by the owners of the farm and that would avoid cutting through those vital natural resources, "...it seems appropriate to ask the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod ... to lend their weight to this effort. Here we have these fine organizations dedicated to protecting and preserving our environment. Let them join us in coming to the assistance of a beleaguered farm..."

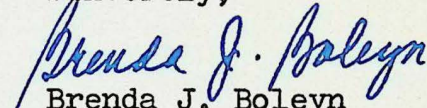
We want to make it clear that before that article ever came to our attention we had already taken steps to support that effort in what we considered the most effective way, consistent with the purposes and powers of our organization.

The Grazing Fields Farm some time ago retained Attorney Gregor McGregor to institute an action in the Federal District Court in Boston to secure the adoption of the alternative route wanted by the Grazing Fields Farm. We have already proposed ways in which we could assist Attorney McGregor in that law suit. He has expressed his appreciation, without qualification, and we are awaiting his specific ideas concerning how we can best assist.

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We consider it far more effective to work cooperatively with Mr. McGregor with reference to that law suit, than to go it alone in some direction which might not harmonize with the strategies of the one who is now in charge of the whole matter.

Sincerely,

  
Brenda J. Boleyn  
President, APCC

BJB:ep