

December 6, 2021

Dear Jessica and Matt,

As we evolve the overall landscape master plan for your property on North Road in Chilmark, I thought it might be useful to outline our design methodology and summarize the overarching principles that are guiding our work on the comprehensive landscape plan. In addition to our design process, I also want to address some of the detailed areas in the proximity of proposed architectural improvements.

Research Based Design Process:

As we have discussed on various occasions, our process begins with two currents of parallel research: Cultural and Ecological. As we map soil types, hydrology, and evaluate forest health and invasive plant pressure, we would simultaneously propose, at the appropriate time of year, relevant species-specific biological inventories of the property. As you know, our staff includes experts in both restoration ecology and conservation biology, and they would be prepared to suggest ecological inventories for species most relevant to your site. These would likely include bird inventories given the mix of hardwood forest and open meadow as well as herpetofauna and invertebrates given the rich complex of wetland habitats on the property. Extensive soil tests will also be revelatory of soil biome health across the property.

Parallel to the ecological inventory and assessment, we would dive into cultural landscape research including the history and lifeways of the Wampanoag, and the patterns and traditions of colonial settlement and agricultural enterprises from the 18th through 20th centuries when the encroachment of development transformed the agrarian nature of the island. Inevitably this cultural landscape research yields meaningful narratives of the landscape that might inspire authentic and enduring design responses and maintenance methodologies.

It is a rare opportunity to work with owners on such a large piece of land who share a deep commitment to stewardship in the face of disappearing biodiversity and historic traces that are so easily lost. We appreciate this opportunity.

Guiding Principles:

- Work to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the property through native plantings, removal of aggressive invasive plants, and enhancement of the range of existing habitats on the property.
- Protect and sustain the spatial integrity that identifies this land as an agrarian landscape, including the balance of forest and meadow, stone walls, and placement of authentic architectural features.
- Rely on native plants, from ground covers to forest canopy trees, for any introductions to the property. Biosource plants to the fullest extent possible.

- Maintain a light touch on the landscape with minimal yet meaningful improvements in some areas and an absence of intervention in others (such as the wetlands).
- For any productive landscapes including orchards, ruminants, or vegetable production, follow regenerative and sustainable agricultural principals, designing the protection of soil and water.
- There are interesting microhabitats on the property including expression of surface springs, stone outcrops, and dramatic topographic features. These should be studied and enhanced for wildlife value and best practices for conservation and not subject to architectural interventions, protecting the viewsheds of neighbors.

Wetlands Maintenance Around the House:

Regarding some of the areas of perched springs near the existing buildings, we would suggest completing an enclosure of the large boulder walls to prevent unintentional management within the enclosure that could damage plant communities and compact hydric soils. The area currently has mostly full sun and we think it is a strong candidate for establishing a native wet meadow habitat. The property already has substantial forested wetland habitat, so this is a unique opportunity for a sunny, wet meadow ecosystem to thrive on your property given the protection of surrounding stone walls. Specific plant lists will be developed by our conservation staff members if this idea is of interest to you and the Chilmark Conservation Commission.

In closing, I would also like to mention that ongoing biological monitoring of biodiversity on privately held lands can contribute important data to the body of science helping us understand the impacts of climate extremes in northeastern ecologies. Given that we will be creating baseline data related to aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity of your property, it would be interesting to develop some ongoing protocol for measuring the impact of your stewardship of this landscape over time. If this is of interest to you, we can develop that monitoring protocol and set that up for the years to come.

Many thanks for trusting us as your thought partners in the future of this rare and beautiful landscape. We are honored to be involved.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas L. Woltz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thomas Woltz, ASLA, NZILA, PhD honoris causa