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## Martha's Vineyard Commission

### DRI # 589 Red Gate Farm

### MVC Staff Report - 1/27/06

## 1. DESCRIPTION

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- 1.1 Applicant:** Caroline B. Kennedy & Edwin Schlossberg, and same as guardians of three children, Richard Renehan (lawyer), Doug Hoehn (engineer and agent)
- 1.2 Project Location:** Many lots off of Moshup's Trail (366 acres)
- 1.3 Proposal:** To create an Estate Plan on 366 acres in Aquinnah.
- 1.4 Zoning:** Rural Residential. The entire Town of Aquinnah is a DCPC. Portions of the property fall within the Moshup's Trail DCPC and the Coastal DCPC.
- 1.5 Local Permits:** PB Special Permit, ConCom for Wetlands,
- 1.6 Surrounding Land Uses:** residential, tribal lands
- 1.7 Project History:** Jacqueline Kennedy purchased the properties in 1978 from the Hornblower family. The property is largely undeveloped with the exception of the homestead, the caretakers' house and a cabin. There had been two proposed subdivisions of the land into many lots that predate zoning.
- 1.8 Project Summary:** To create an Estate Plan on 366 acres in Aquinnah. The goals of the family are to give each of their children (3) a lot so that they have a stake in the land, to preserve their privacy and the beauty of the Homestead lot (2), to preserve the environment, and to create and control the possibility of a future sale of two lots. These two lots would not be sub-dividable if sold outside of the family.

## 2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

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- 2.1 DRI Referral:** Aquinnah Planning Board
- 2.2 DRI Trigger:** 3.205: Any development which proposes to divide a contiguous or related ownership of land of thirty acres or more, except when divided into less than six parcels that are irrevocably prohibited from further division.
- 2.3 Pre-Application meeting with staff:** November 17, 2005
- 2.4 LUPC:** December 19, 2005 (first), January 9, 2006
- 2.5 Site visits:** January 31, 2006
- 2.6 Public Hearing:** February 2, 2006

## 3. PLANNING CONCERNS

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### 3.1 Some Key Issues

- Regional
- This is an important tract of habitat hosting two federally listed species and at least a dozen state protected species distributed widely across the property. It

will trigger extensive NHESP review and permitting when actual buildings are proposed.

- Local
- Squibnocket Pond is an extremely nitrogen sensitive watershed.

### **3.2 Environment**

- **Vegetation:** The property has a wide variety of vegetative communities including a mixed oak deciduous forest, maritime dunes and shrub lands, wetlands, grasslands, and coastal heathlands.
- **Habitat:**
  - The entire site is listed as priority habitat (PH 1745).
  - A portion of the site is in estimated habitat of rare wildlife (WH 1134).
  - There is no trigger for NHESP review if no actions are planned. A plan that included roads, driveways and lots would require review. Tim Simmons of NHESP has said that he “would go on record stating this is one of the most important tracts of land in the Commonwealth harboring 2 federally listed species and at least a dozen state protected species distributed widely across the property. As such it would require extensive review and permitting at the next level”.
  - Doug Cooper (Cooper Environmental), an environmental consultant was asked by the applicants to flag wetlands and to assess the habitat on property. His report is in the file.
  - It should be noted that the owner’s stewardship of the land is part of the reason that the land is such valuable habitat.
- **Water:**
- **Wastewater / Stormwater:**
  - The entire project is situated in the Squibnocket watershed.
  - This property makes up almost a third of the watershed.
  - Squibnocket Pond does not fit into our usual nitrogen load limit calculation methodology because there is no measurable tide. We estimate that the pond takes well over ½ year to flush.
  - Because of the limited flushing, the large size of the pond, and the limited development potential of the relatively small watershed, acid rain plays a very significant role in the total nitrogen budget of the watershed.
  - Squibnocket shows symptoms of being a eutrophic pond: algae blooms (phytoplankton), excess rooted aquatic weeds, and high organic nitrogen content.
  - Although we do not have as accurate a nitrogen load limit for this pond as we do for others, it is clearly near its limit.

- Additional nitrogen can be expected to increase the eutrophic symptoms because growth of phytoplankton is proportional to the amount of nitrogen.

### **3.3 Transportation**

- **Access:** The internal roads of the property are reported to be in relatively excellent shape.
- **Parking:** Not an issue.
- **Traffic Summary:** LUPC voted unanimously that the project does not require a traffic study.

### **3.4 Affordable Housing**

- While they are not required by the MVC affordable housing policy to contribute at this time, the applicants have offered to make a \$100,000 donation to the Aquinnah Housing Committee.

### **3.5 Economic Impact**

- The applicant is preserving Lot 7 as unbuildable without burdening a conservation organization to purchase a conservation restriction. If they did so it would also impact the Town tax base.

### **3.6 Scenic Values**

- **Streetscape:** Not visible from either State Road or Moshup's Trail.
- **Building Massing:** No buildings planned at this time. Development envelopes will account for less than 15% of the entire property.
- **Architectural Detailing:** N/A
- **A.D.A. Accessibility:** N/A

### **3.7 Local Impact/Abutters**

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## **4. CORRESPONDENCE**

**4.1 Town Officials:** The Aquinnah Planning Board and Conservation Commission have both written and addressed LUPC with their strong support for this project as presented noting the thoughtful design and its minimal impact on the growth and development.

**4.2 Island Organizations:** Sheriff's Meadow has expressed satisfaction with the preliminary plans noting both the history of good stewardship of the land and the large lot size. The Vineyard Conservation Society (VCS) has written approvingly of the large lots and the designation of a 61.7-acre lot as unbuildable. VCS has a major project, the Moshup Trail Project, that abuts this property.

**4.3 Public:** No correspondence yet.