

BY CHRIS YERKES

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ORV Remodeling

Since spending a two-year stint as a teacher on a remote island off the southern coast of Massachusetts, I've found working in remote, hard-to-get-to places to be a challenge that I enjoy. So when a client approached me about a remodeling project on Pochet Island on Cape Cod, I jumped at the chance. The island is on the bay side of a barrier beach that faces the Atlantic Ocean. That part of the beach—including Pochet Island—is accessible only by over-sand vehicles or by boat.

As the seagull flies, Pochet Island is only a few hundred yards from civilization to the south, but that access is by boat. Instead, we chose the longer, over-sand vehicle route. Each day, the crew gathered at the head of the ORV trail and then truck-pooled to the site **(1)**. To get there, we drove down the ORV trail for more than a mile before heading west and crossing a small bridge over the creek that officially makes Pochet an island. We had to be mindful of ORV trail flooding during astronomic tides.

The project house, one of four houses on the island, sat on a small, grassy rise surrounded mainly by pitch pine, scrub oak, and native underbrush. Our mission was to replace the cedar-shake siding while taking care of any deterioration we discovered along the way.

Views from the house and property were spectacular, with the ocean and the dunes in the distance—one day we saw a pod of whales pass near the shore—but the other side of that coin was that the house had suffered from exposure to severe storms off the ocean. We weren't surprised to find areas of rot, along with places where members of the local rodent community had chewed through the exterior.

Because of the limited access, we had to tote tools and materials out to the site ourselves, although the local lumberyard did brave the ORV trail to bring us loads of material on occasion. But careful planning was a must—we couldn't just "run to the store" for an extra box of screws or a 2x4. The house itself was off the grid, so we used a generator to run our power tools **(2)**.

As we stripped off the old red cedar, we found that the horizontal board sheathing was in remarkably good shape, which made our job easier. As we came across broken or rotted trim, we replaced it, prepainting the new trim a dark green to match the rest of the trim on the house. All in all, the project took less than six weeks to complete, and once again, the little gambrel was ready to shelter the owners and fend off the ravages of its coastal environment **(3)**.

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Photos by Chris Yerkes