



Newsletter

Spring 2015

Volume 6, Issue 1

Association Leaders

Brian Harrington,
President
Lee Pulis, Vice Pres.
John Foye, Treasurer
Rali Pulis, Secretary
Ken Cannon & Kate von
Goeler, Webmasters
Claire & Emma Esterman
Student Assistant
Webmasters
Paula Kuketz, Water
Safety Committee
Martha Sheldon,
Membership Committee
Geri Williams,
Newsletter Editor
Lee Pulis, Education and
Outreach Committee
Don Williams and Jack
Kedian, Water Quality
Committee
Dennis White,
Government Liaison
Ramona Krogman, At
Large

Upcoming Events

April 25 & 26, 10 - 5
Plimoth Plantation's
Herring Festival
Grist Mill at Jenny Pond
May 17 7am Bird Walk
Bournedale
Conservation Area just
off Herring Pond Rd..
May 18, 7pm HPWA
General Meeting
New Testament Church
Long Pond Rd.
Learn about the special
life of our watershed.
May 30 10am-4pm
SEMPBA Pine Fest
Charge Pond
Campground Miles
Standish State Forest

Website

www.TheHerringPondsWatershed.org

President's Message

Brian Harrington, President

Our Association continues to thrive, thanks in good part to the dedication of our Committees. One of our most active committees has been the Water Quality Committee, chaired by Eb von Goeler for many years. The logistics of managing this committee range from enlisting volunteers, figuring out what sampling protocols are right for our needs, interacting with our Town with whom we have been partnering, watching weather forecasts with an eagle eye to determine when the conditions will be right for the sampling (during the right storms for runoff sampling, and during the right "calms" for the pond sampling), finding volunteered boats to 'commandeer' for the time needed to complete a round of sampling, organizing and reporting on all the data that has been collected, ensuring that water samples collected are delivered to the analytical laboratory in time, finding and keeping all the right equipment, and believe it or not, the list goes on. Eb has served our Association with the vigor of a newly retired soul, but the truth is that he is a tested octogenarian, and finally is taking his leave as Chair of the Water Quality Committee. In simple words, we can not thank him enough for all of the work he has done for our Association. Every person who lives in our watershed, whether they know it or not, has a debt of gratitude to Eb. I personally stand up and applaud what Eb has given to each of us! Thank you. I also want to recognize Marleen von Goeler who is stepping down as Chair of our Programs Committee. This also is no easy task. Marleen has been the person behind the scenes who has brought our members and friends a series of wonderful programs that we have all benefited from and enjoyed. Some of the programs have focused on

unglamorous information, like ideas for 'best practice' maintenance of septic systems in a watershed, while others have been refreshing topics such as good gardening practices in a watershed. These, and many other topics that Marleen has organized for our programs, all have a common thread in that they have focused on how we can responsibly live in a fragile ecosystem that few of us know how to preserve and protect. They have helped me and many others to take small but steady steps up our watershed "sustainability ladder". Thank you Marleen, and best wishes to you and Eb in your HPWA semi-retirement. We all look forward to your continued involvement in the Association, and will miss your combined wisdom in our Executive Committee meetings.

Finally, we are delighted to note that the Water Quality Committee chair has been filled by two people, Don Williams and Jack Kedian, who bring expertise and experience that would be hard to find anywhere. I am thrilled and delighted that they have agreed to co-chair our new water quality leadership. And I thank Geri Williams for stepping in to line up public programs. I am also delighted to report that Ramona Krogman has agreed to serve as a 'Member-at-large' on our Executive Committee -- we look forward to her sharing in our Association guidance.

We had a hard winter, but now it is time to "think Spring", a little hard to do on the cold, dreary morning when this missive is written. But the river herring are staging to come up into our watershed, some spring bird songs are about, a single peeper was calling a few days ago, and we all know that warmer weather is heading our way. If you have not heard the word, we are looking for folks to help with our river herring counts. Let us know if you could volunteer. Whatever the case, enjoy this wonderful season!

Opposition to 10-Home Proposed Development between Triangle and Little Herring Ponds

By Lee Pulis

The next Planning Board public hearing continuance on this proposal is scheduled for **Monday, April 27th** at Town Hall. Although the Community Preservation Committee has been attempting to negotiate purchase of the 15-acre site for conservation and recreational trail connections, no agreement was reached in time for April Town Meeting. HPWA is continuing to press for a no-build option for protection of surface and groundwater quality, recreation, preservation of connective pine barrens upland forest and species, and the integrity of our important river herring run. We have established that the Cedarville Steering Committee erred and possibly violated Open Meeting Law in supporting this development after twice incorrectly stating the location on consecutive meeting agendas. Watch for any member email alerts asking you to attend and show strength in numbers. Visit the HPWA website home page for more info, chronology and links on this matter, and contact Brian Harrington, brian.harrington205@gmail.com, Dennis White, or Lee Pulis lee@theherringpondswatershed.com, to offer your support and services.

Education Committee Activities

By Lee Pulis, Chair

HPWA Out and About: HPWA hosted an information table on local volunteerism opportunities March 15 at First Parish Church's Local Environmental Fair, and again on April 6 at The Spire Center for the Plymouth Open Space Committee's forum: "[How Can I Help? Preserving Natural Plymouth](#)". Several volunteers signed up to help with our first herring count, and to become members

Affiliations and Networking:

HPWA's Executive committee voted March 23 to accept Pew Trust's invitation to join the Herring Alliance www.herringalliance.org/alliance-members as its 100th member organization. The Excom also voted to support the Southeast Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance initiative to form a Regional Conservation Partnership, designating Lee Pulis to represent HPWA on SEMPBA's RCP Steering Committee.

Watershed Action Alliance Conference & Plimoth Plantation Herring Run Festival:

Registration may be closed, but watch for news and online reporting about the Watershed Action Alliance's [Future of Water Conference](#) <http://www.watershedaction.org/index.php/2015-conference> Friday, April 24, 2015 at Plimoth Plantation. HPWA is a sponsor, and our Education Chair Lee Pulis will moderate the [Outreach panel session](#) <http://www.watershedaction.org/index.php/2015-conference/session-descriptions#Outreach>. We will also host kids' activities **Saturday and Sunday April 25 & 26** at the Plantation's 2nd annual Herring Run Festival at the Grist Mill at Jenney Pond. Visit the webpage <http://www.plimoth.org/mill> and plan to be there with HPWA (and help with our activity table).

SEMPBA Pine Fest

<http://www.pinebarrensalliance.org/pinefesthome.asp> HPWA will again host a decorate-a-herring activity table for kids at the second annual event. This is a great fun all-family event, attended by over 500 in its first year; we encourage all friends of HPWA to visit the web page and plan to attend **May 30** at Charge Pond in Myles Standish State Forest. Contact Lee Pulis, lee@theherringpondswatershed.com, if you would like to help host our HPWA info/activity table.

Help Another Species

Owls, wood ducks, great crested flycatchers, flickers, kestrels, chickadees, wrens, bluebirds, tree swallows, nuthatches, flying squirrels and other species are again house hunting and competing for limited natural tree cavities and woodpecker holes for raising their young. You can help by building nest boxes of specific dimensions. Contact Lee (lee@theherringpondswatershed.org) for advice on construction and placement, and maybe you will attract a tenant like this red phase Screech Owl below that just took up residence in Lee's front yard.



Spring Bird Walk.

Sunday May 17 7:00am

Join Herring Ponds Watershed Association members and friends for a **Spring bird-walk**.

Meet at the Bournedale herring run park located at the junction of Bournedale and Herring Pond Roads, 7:00 am, light rain or shine.

With luck we will find some migrant warblers and thrushes as well as resident bird species. The trip leader will be Brian

Harrington, an ornithologist retired from the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences and President of the HPWA.

Ad hoc Efforts to Elevate the Status of the ACEC

By Lee Pulis. Vice President

Noting renewed development pressure on remaining globally rare Pine Barrens uplands in our watershed, HPWA formed an *ad hoc* committee to draft a citizens' nomination to NOAA for consideration as a National Marine Sanctuary. We based our case on the importance of our historic herring fishery in the food chain for the declining marine cod fishery. We held meetings with the Town of Plymouth, Stellwagen Bank NMS, Waquoit Bay Estuarine Research Reserve, and talked with Manomet Center's Downeast Fisheries Partnership, Woods Hole fish scientists, and others. Our talks with NOAA indicate that our freshwater system does not meet criteria for NMS designation; however the learning, documentation and networking involved have prepared us to advocate for further designations and affiliations (to be identified) to protect and preserve priority resources within the ACEC. Our eye is to the future: Plymouth's 400th anniversary, and continued enjoyment of the watershed by future generations. Contact Membership Chair Martha Sheldon, Martha.sheldon205@gmail.com, if you would like to know more and can offer help with this very ambitious advocacy effort.

Upcoming General Meeting

By Geri Williams

Please join us for our first HPWA public meeting of the year on Monday, May 18 at 7pm in the New Testament Church on Long Pond Rd and learn more about what makes our ponds and watershed so unique and wonderful. Lee Pulis and Martha Sheldon will share some of the interesting material that they gathered in doing research for the National Marine Sanctuary Status petition. We also plan to have a slide presentation of some of the common and rare animal, bird and plant life seen here. So if you have some pictures to share please send them to Brian

Harrington by May 10 by email at brianharrington205@gmail.com If any members have suggestions for a special program or are prepared to present a program themselves, please contact Geri at: 508-833-4355.

Tank Talk

By Dave Clark

Question: How can I locate my septic tank?

Answer: There are some fairly easy ways to locate the 1500 gallon rectangular tank if you were not provided with an "as built" drawing with your property. First, locate the drain pipe in your basement and note the spot where it penetrates the foundation wall. This will give you a starting point to begin the search outside the building. Next, go outside and see if there is an area where the snow melted sooner than the rest of the yard. The closer to the surface the tank is, the more effect the warm water will have on the snow. Once you suspect an area, take a slim metal rod and start probing the ground. If the tank is within 1 to 2 feet of the surface, you should be able to locate the flat top which is about 8 to 10 feet long and 5 feet wide.

If this method fails, try the local Health Department. They should have the septic "as built" for your property on file from when they approved the installation. Note: Don't be surprised if it is not 100% accurate; but, it will be close.

Q: How often does my septic tank need to be pumped?

A: This question depends on who you ask. Providers of septic pumping services will normally quote "every year". This answer has no basis in fact, only economics-theirs. The correct answer is: it depends on many factors such as the number of people using the system, how it is used, and the age and condition of the drain field/drain pit. A system in good shape serving one or two people who do not use a garbage grinder and are careful not to put harsh chemicals or anything not biodegradable in the system could easily go five, or more, years before pumping.

Q: How can I know when my system should be pumped so that we are not wasting money?

A: The only way to know for sure is to inspect the septic tank and outlet filter. It requires a little work and is smelly, but it will save you \$200 or more. Here are the steps to an inspection:

- Locate the tank and uncover the inspection cover at the end farthest from the house. This will allow you to inspect the outlet "T" and filter (if equipped with one).
- Using a long stick check the thickness of the scum layer on top. If this gets too thick it will flow under the outlet "T" and clog the filter or drain field.
- Then check the sludge depth on at the bottom of the tank. This should not be more than a few to 6 inches deep.
- If the outlet "T" is equipped with a filter, pull it out and wash out anything that could be clogging the filter with a garden hose. Replace the filter.
- Replace and secure the inspection cover.

A properly running system will have fairly clean water leaving the tank for the drain field. If this is the case and the sludge and scum levels are minimal, you have just saved the cost of pumping. If you see that a problem is developing, have the tank pumped to save a costly problem with your drain field.

Spring is here! Think Green!

Reduce lawn. Plant a vegetable garden and enjoy fresh produce.

Use organic slow release nitrogen fertilizers without phosphate. Do not fertilize your lawn within 100 feet of a pond, use ¼ inch of compost instead.

Plant a vegetative border near beach. Daylilies and daisies will add color and thrive for many years. Fringed bleeding heart will thrive in shady areas. Clethra and fothergilla are native shrubs that grow well and smell wonderful when blooming

Rake leaves out of the pond and storm grates.

Membership Renewal Time

By Martha Sheldon, Chair

We're about to start our annual Membership Drive. Please send in your membership renewal promptly, your support helps us finance water testing, educational outreach programs and materials. When you send us your email address we can communicate quickly when there are meetings and issues of concern to watershed residents.

Do you have a local friend or neighbor who would benefit by receiving our HPWA newsletters and announcements? Spread the word! If you provide us with their email address (get their permission first) when you renew, we will add them to our membership *for free* for six months.

HPWA Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

___ \$15 Member, vote & communications

___ \$25 Family, 2 voting members & communications

___ \$55 Contributing Member, vote & communications

___ \$100 Sustaining Member, receive all of above

Make checks payable to **The Herring Ponds Watershed Association, Ltd**

Mail to: Herring Ponds Watershed Assoc.

P O Box 522

Sagamore Beach, MA 02562

Water Quality Committee

By Don Williams, Co-Chair

Jack Kedian and I are looking forward to keeping the Herring Ponds watershed a clean place to live. We are hoping to get the necessary data to enable runoff remediation at several sites and need volunteers to collect samples at runoff sites around Great Herring Pond during rainfalls of 1 inch or more. Call Don (508 833-4355) to find out how you can help.

Thank you to Eb and Marlene von Goeler

By Brian Harrington

In the President's letter I noted my gratefulness and admiration for the roles that Marleen and Eb von Goeler have played as chairs of two of our important watershed association committees. But this does not do full justice to the roles that Marleen and Eb have played to our young organization. Not long after I retired in 2007, a friend told me that she had had a conversation with a person named Marleen, and that Marleen was very concerned about the health and sustainability of Great Herring Pond. We talked, and quickly agreed to gather some people together to explore how we might find ways to sustain and nurture this piece of Plymouth that we loved so much. Marleen soon assembled a small group at her home, including Charlotte and Ed Russell who were pivotal players in Plymouth's Six Ponds Association. The idea for a Herring Ponds Watershed Association was born at this meeting, and we formed what might be called a 'founding committee'. In that first meeting we collectively decided that an association should focus on the entire Herring River Watershed, not just a single pond. The reasoning for this was simple -- the ponds were not entities unto themselves, but were interdependent with the lands that surrounded them, with the fishes that lived in them, and with all the waters that flowed into and through them. We also agreed that this association would be as inclusive as we could make it, that it would not be anti this or that, but that it would be 'pro' and focus on work to sustain the quality environment that we were so privileged to be living in. And in its first years, our Herring Ponds Watershed Association has kept this focus, and has made wonderful strides in addressing the founding visions. Throughout this time we have been nurtured by the wisdom and energy of Marleen and Eb, also our first Co-Presidents. I honor and thank them for what they have fostered in our Herring Ponds Watershed Association!

Think Water Safety

From Paula Kuketz

It's Spring but the water is still very cold. In Massachusetts, life preservers are required to be worn by: **canoeists/kayakers from September 15 – May 15**. Youth less than 12 years of age, personal watercraft users and waterskiers must wear life preservers at all times.

Always operate at slow, no-wake speed (6 mph or less) within 150 feet of the following:

Swimmer

Shoreline

Waterskier

Boat launch

Raft or float

Moored or docked boat

If we all think **Safety First** we will all enjoy a fun-filled and safe summer.

Run Herring Run

The herring start running or migrating from the canal up the Herring River into Great and Little Herring ponds each April when the water temperature reaches about 50 degrees. There are two species alewives and blueback herring that are very difficult to distinguish, so they are collectively called river herring. They are *anadromous* – fish that are born in fresh water, spend their lives at sea, and return to freshwater to spawn. They are also *iteroparus* – repeat swimmers and *philpparous* – return to the same river.

Volunteers from HPWA have been watching and counting for ten minute stretches at the bridge at Sandy Pond Rd. three times a day to get a better count of the actual number of herring that make it into Great Herring Pond to lay their eggs. As of April 20th no fish have been sighted, but they should be running soon. We'll collect data until they stop running in early June and forward it to the Division of Marine Fisheries to be collated and a final count determined. Our herring run is considered one of the healthier runs and numbers have been climbing the past few years.

Stop by there to see the herring run or at the Canal Herring Run Visitor Center.