

Newsletter

Summer 2016

HPWA is a 501(c)3 Charitable Organization

Volume 7, Issue 2

Directors

Brian Harrington,
President

Lee Pulis, Vice Pres.

John Foye, Treasurer

Linda White, Secretary

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Asst. Webmaster, Lee
Pulis

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

Jerry Levine & Phil Angell,
Members-at-Large

Website

www.TheHerringPondsWatershed.org

Upcoming Events

**July 11, 7pm HPWA
General Meeting**

New Testament Church,
1120 Long Pond Rd.
Plymouth Harbor Master
will be guest speaker,
discussing water safety
on Great Herring Pond

August 6, 3 - 6pm

Annual Potluck Picnic

Weston Bog, 173 Herring
Pond Rd. Details at right.
Contact Jack Kedian to
RSVP or with questions.

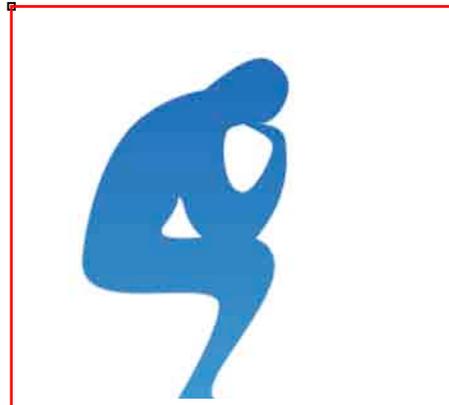
**August 22, 7pm HPWA
Annual Meeting**

New
Testament Church, 1120
Long Pond Rd. Election of
officers and social time.

President's Message

Brian Harrington, President

When an organization like HPWA reaches a secure age, as I think we now have, it becomes important to be more confident



(proactive) about defining our mission and goals, and how we achieve them. And so we are beginning our process of planning what we want our Association to look like in the future. As a first step your Directors are starting to lay out their own thoughts, which we will continue doing until we have consensus on a "template". Once we have our first template, we will make it available for reactions from Membership. But if you have thoughts of matters we should be considering at this early stage, please contact myself or any of our individual Directors.

In this letter, I also want to stress that almost everything that your Association accomplishes is done through volunteer power. Volunteers power our office work, power our administration, and power almost everything that our various committees accomplish. We have no paid staff. As it happens, our Association work is mostly being done by your Directors, a circumstance that can lead to "burn-out" of our best volunteers. We have an extraordinary and hard working board, but we need a broader volunteer base. Can you help? Let us know. All of our committees welcome help. See our web site for more information.

**Join us for the Herring Pond Watershed
POTLUCK PICNIC ON THE POND**



Westons Bogs, 173 Herring Pond Rd.

Saturday August 6, 3:00 - 6:00 PM

Rain Date - Sunday August 7

**Please bring an interesting appetizer, salad,
main dish or dessert to share
along with beverages & chairs.**

Plates, cups, forks, napkins, grill provided

RSVP to: jkedian1@hotmail.com

**To tell us the dish you're bringing &
find out what's already on the menu.**

As one of the first steps of our our visioning process we have formulated a mission statement. If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact Brian at

brian.harrington205@gmail.com

Mission Statement

HPWA seeks to safeguard the Herring River Watershed, a state-designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern. We seek to unite, educate, and enlist watershed residents to promote daily practices compatible with a healthy watershed ecology, to monitor watershed health, and to proactively engage citizens towards safe and respectful watershed living.

Watershed Health Affects All of Us

By Don Williams, Water Quality Co-Chair

All of us have seen (or smelled) ponds that are covered with hydrilla, saturated with algae or infested with dead or dying fish, mussels or snails. Whether we are boaters, fishermen, swimmers, or nature lovers, we are all adversely affected by deterioration of water quality. This article will outline the consequences of an unhealthy pond on each type of user.

Before doing so, however, we must understand some of the basics of southeastern Massachusetts pond chemistry. Most of the quality issues are caused by excessive nutrients or displacement of native species by foreign or invasive ones. *“Excessive nutrients?”* But how can that be harmful? Aren’t nutrients, by definition, helpful? The answer is an unqualified *“YES,”* unless these nutrients are present in excessive amounts. Lawn and garden fertilizers advertise three numbers that represent the relative amounts of the three elements NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, respectively) that are essential for plant health. For freshwater ponds, the presence of large amounts of phosphorus can cause recurring algae blooms throughout the warm months that lead to low dissolved oxygen levels. But don’t plants consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen? How then can algae *reduce* the pond oxygen level? Unfortunately, algae growth is cyclical and rapid. Fueled by an overabundance of phosphorus, algae die and fall to the bottom of the pond before they can produce much oxygen. At the bottom of the pond, the algae decompose and in this process consume far more of the dissolved oxygen in the water than it has produced in its short lifetime.

How does this phosphorus get into the pond? For ponds like Great Herring and Little Herring Ponds, the sources of phosphorus, in relative order of importance are: 1) septic systems, 2)

pond sediment, 3) road and slope runoff and 4) fertilizers. Massachusetts has recently passed laws prohibiting phosphorus from dish and laundry detergents (reducing phosphorus from septic effluent in the long term) and from lawn and garden fertilizers (reducing watershed resident phosphorus contribution in the long term), but the fertilizers used by the cranberry growing industry have, over the years, provided more than ample phosphorus for the near term, that is stored in the pond sediment. Under certain conditions (low dissolved oxygen, higher pond acidity), this stored phosphorus can be released into the pond.

An important key to a successful Watershed Management Plan is knowing how much phosphorus originates from each source and how the phosphorus contamination can best be remediated. With substantial help from the Town of Plymouth, the HPWA hopes to start developing a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan this fall using an experienced consultant, Ed Eichner, from UMass Dartmouth.

Invasive plant species are brought to a pond by boats that have picked up these hitch-hikers from other ponds frequented by the boats. Generally, a change in pond habitat can drive native species out, leading to a more favorable environment for non-native species that can be faster growing under adverse conditions and crowd out the indigenous species at an ever increasing rate. Boat propellers, for example, chop up invasive plants and, in many cases, each piece can generate a new plant.

How then, is each of our pond users affected by deterioration of pond health?

Boaters

Algae blooms are unpleasant for marine cooling systems, fallen water skiers, kayak paddles and sculling oars. Moreover, the esthetics of a pond cruise is severely compromised if the pond bottom is obscured by algae or the surface is cluttered by noxious invasive weeds. In the extreme, pond weeds can foul propellers.

Fishermen

Adequate dissolved oxygen levels are essential for a healthy fish population. As oxygen levels decrease, fish species such as trout and bass decrease in number and suckers and catfish increase. Pond weeds can snag lines; algae fragments get reeled in and foul monofilament line. One definitive sign of poor pond health is odor.

Swimmers

Algae blooms are unpleasant for swimmers and can often cause itching. Invasive pond weeds can make swimming impossible. Cyanobacteria blooms are toxic.

Nature Lovers

Good pond health is essential for the viability of herring (alewife and blueback) that are a main food source of many commercially desirable species. For the last two years, volunteers have counted the herring in the Herring River in order to monitor changes (both positive and negative) in number. Birds such as cormorant, an occasional loon, bald eagle, osprey, great blue heron and belted kingfisher are dependent on healthy fish in our watershed for sustenance. Changes in dissolved oxygen levels can reduce the numbers of preferred fish species for these birds, negatively affecting populations. Swans, mallards, turtles and toads likewise depend on a stable, familiar food source. Several freshwater mussel species present in our ponds are endangered and their range and numbers are very dependent on dissolved oxygen levels.

We can all help maintain this delicate natural balance in our ponds by regularly pumping septic tanks, cleaning boats, planting on severe slopes, using fertilizers without phosphorus, being vigilant in identifying invasive species and preventing household chemicals (antifreeze, oil, gasoline, cleaners, medicines, pesticides, herbicides, etc.) from entering our ponds from runoff or septic.

A proactive stewardship will ensure that our watershed will be enjoyed by many more generations in the future.

Education Committee News

By Lee Pulis, Chair

2016 HPWA Herring Count – Donna Gage and Sara Grady coordinators.

The count ended May 29th, after 60 days of counting. Our 21 communal data sheets recorded 400 individual 10-minute counts by 20 volunteers (totaling 4503 fish). Data sheets were submitted to Sara in PDF format on May 31. Sara's interns will enter the data into Excel and the population estimate from the statistical model will be forthcoming. Preliminary data from the electronic counter at the canal indicates the run declined by 40% this year from last, 240,00 fish in 2015 to 145,00 this year. This is a cause for concern.

Board members hope to meet soon with Woods Hole Oceanographic Inst. researcher Joel Llopiz to learn about his larval herring assessment studies on Great Herring Pond. If you see a WHOI Florida Keys flats boat at the launch or doing plankton tows on the pond, Joel invites you to strike up a conversation.

Pew Charitable Trust's Herring Alliance has alerted us that NOAA has [proposed](#) an increase in the amount of severely depleted river herring and shad allowed to be caught at sea in New England by at least half a million more fish every year. Under the proposal, the amount of river herring and shad allowed to be killed in the Atlantic herring fishery will increase by a total of 16%. **In the Cape Cod region, the cap will increase by 144%.** This conflicts with the Massachusetts ban on taking herring in state waters and could undermine restoration efforts such as Town Brook and Tidmarsh Farms, in which NOAA participates. The current public comment period on this proposed rule is 30 days, closing on **July 21**. If you care deeply enough about river herring, [write a letter](#) to NOAA, write a letter to the editor, pitch this to local reporters, post to your social media, or talk about it with other members.

HPWA's Decorate-a-Herring tabling activity was on tour at SEMPBA's Pine Fest on May 21. We estimated

about 80 kids colored our herring cutouts while we talked with them and their parents. HPWA was among about 30 environmental groups in attendance. Our next outreach tabling event is at the Friends of Myles Standish State Forest annual **Fishing Derby** on Saturday, September 24th, for which we welcome members contacting Lee, leepulis@gmail.com, to volunteer and get active and involved. Kids are our future watershed stewards.



Indian Brook Elementary School – About 150 4th graders enjoyed Herring Woman and Litter Lady (Nancy Carroll) perform an animated reading of our *Superhero Run, Herring, Run* comic. Nancy was delighted to do this and is ready for more, so we will plan to make a pitch this Fall, offering area school districts additional such events in Spring 2017. Thank Indian Brook PTA president Wendy Marshall for setting this in motion.

Webmaster/Social Media opening – no success attracting a volunteer so far...please spread the word... a description ([Web Services Committee chair](#)) is posted on our web site. And meanwhile check our [Facebook page](#) where we post and share weekly news of interest.



Nancy Carroll, Herring Woman

Weed Watchers Program

John B. Foye

On June 13 at the Wildlands Trust Headquarters, fifteen members and friends took part in the Weed Watchers Identification Course under the guidance of Jim Straub, Program Coordinator of the Mass Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, Lakes and Ponds Program. Using *A Guide to Aquatic Plants* found in our state along with the use of live aquatic plants, Jim took us through the hands on identification of floating leaved, submerged and emergent type plants that can be found in our ponds.

Our members plan to use the *Study Guide to Key Identifying Features of native and non-native aquatic species* to guide them in the collection and identification of aquatic plants. We are in the process of putting a collection and identification plan in place for all areas of our ponds and have planned a comprehensive study under the guidance of Dr. Sara Grady, Watershed Ecologist, in mid summer. Anyone interested in joining our Weed Watchers Program, e-mail John at skipjbfoye@aol.com

Upcoming HPWA Meetings

Join us **July 11 at 7:00pm** New Testament Church on 1120 Long Pond Rd. for our public meeting with guest, Plymouth Harbor Master Chad Hunter. He will be addressing water sport and boating safety regulations and listening to concerns of those in attendance. After the very relevant water safety discussion, there will be a business meeting with reports of the various committees, including, water quality, education and outreach and the new weed watchers committees.

The Nominating Committee Chair Dennis White, proposed Brian Harrington to continue as President and John Foye as Treasurer at the May 16 public meeting and will ask for nominations from the floor. All are welcome to attend this meeting, bring a neighbor who might be interested in learning more about living wisely in our watershed.

The following meeting will be our Annual Meeting on **August 22 at 7pm**, also at the New Testament Church. There will be election of President and Treasurer. This is also a time to socialize with other members while we enjoy some light refreshments. Contributions of bite-sized desserts will be appreciated.

Water Safety

by Paula Kuketz, Water Safety Committee Chair

We want everyone to enjoy boating and swimming on beautiful Great Herring Pond this summer and keeping in mind the boating safety rules is the key.

Always operate at a safe speed and keep a sharp look out.

A safe distance is considered:

150 feet from land and swimmers
300 feet from a beach area

(except at headway speed - 6mph or less)
Crossing unreasonably close is a danger to another vessel.

No person under 16 years of age can operate a PWC (personal water craft).
You must be 18 years to operate a PWC,
16-17 years old with a MA Safe Boating

Certificate. Operator and passengers must wear a PFD.

SAFETY IT'S THE LAW.

Bird Watching Made Easy

by Linda White

Looking for something to do after the basketball season is over.....The Cornell Lab Cams are an entertaining, educational.

You can be transported to Kauai, Hawaii where you can watch the Laysan Albatross babies hatch, grow and tonight I watched as Honua (yes, they are named) practiced flapping his/her wings and flew/hopped a short distance. Or you can go to Texas and watch the birth and growth of barn owls, or you can observe the California Condor at Sespe Condor Sanctuary. American Kestrels in Boise, Idaho, Barn Owls in Texas, Barred Owls in Indiana, Great Horned Owls in Savannah, Georgia and the Cornell Feederwatch...all for us to see. You can access this fun - and it is fun, for your family and friends at cams.allaboutbird.org or by googling cornellbirdcams.

Chuck-Will's-Widow calls when the moon rises!

by Martha Sheldon

Below is copy from a rare bird report submitted by Brian Harrington. I heard the bird early last Sunday night and by Weds. we had a couple of dedicated birders waiting for the moon to rise and a chance to hear the bird again. In case you're wondering, hearing is enough for bird enthusiasts.

Plymouth County Rare Bird Alert
Chuck-will's-widow (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) (1)

- Reported Jun 23, 2016 23:00 by **Brian Harrington**



Valley Rd., Plymouth, Massachusetts

- Comments: "Told by a friend that they'd heard it from their back yard a few nights ago, birders familiar with whippoorwill and Chuck-will's calls. Calling from extremely far away, giving typical "Chuck-will's-widow" call. Sounded like it was coming from the northeast of our location (in the direction of Camp Massasoit)."

New Water Testing Strategy

by Jack Kedian



Jack Kedian taking water sample

Following discussions between the Association and the town of Plymouth, a strategy was developed which would lead to a water quality management plan for Great and Little Herring Ponds. Part of that plan is to take water samples for analysis once per month from June through September. Additional monitoring will be on going to measure water clarity and dissolved oxygen levels.

The first water sample was taken on June 14th when Kim Tower from the Plymouth Department of Marine and Environmental Affairs joined HPWA members on GHP. Joining Kim on Joe Solimini's boat were Jerry Levine, Don Williams, John Young, Denise Kedian and Jack Kedian. Dennis White took the reins alone to generate samples from Little Herring Pond the same day.

These samples were taken by Kim to the SMAST testing lab to help us evaluate the health of the water, which we all enjoy. The results of the testing will be available later this year.

Membership Committee News

By Martha Sheldon, Chair

We had a great response to the Association's spring appeal for dues, which was our first-ever sent via U.S. postal mail. Thank you very much for your renewed support – we appreciate it!! If you missed the mailing and the follow-up email reminder, you can use the **form below** to send in your annual dues. We keep dues low in order to engage as many watershed residents as possible. And if you have those **herring postcards** lying around the house, we hope you will use them to give a free 6-month membership to a neighbor. Either you or the person you are gifting can send in the postcard.



HPWA Membership Form 2016-2017

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

___ \$15 Individual Membership,

___ \$25 Family Membership

___ \$55 Contributing Membership

___ \$100 Sustaining Membership

Make checks payable to:

The Herring Ponds Watershed Association, Ltd.

Mail to: HPWA

P O Box 522

Sagamore Beach, MA 02562

HPWA - Many Accomplishments To Be Proud Of

To let you know what we have been doing, Lee Pulis, V.P. and Chair of the Education Committee, compiled the following list:

Public Educational Programs - 4 per year

Newsletters to Members and Friends - 3-4 issues per year

Water Quality Sampling and flow gauge monitoring on Great and Little Herring Ponds

Storm-water Runoff Sampling

Watershed fundraiser "Shed Faire"

Post Card Mailer to watershed residents

Watershed Stewardship Guide creation and distribution - Makepeace

Neighborhood Fund

HPWA Photo Contest and 18-month calendar fundraiser

Annual Members Picnics 2013-2015

Annual Bird Walks

Classroom speaker for PSHS course

Land Protection - Parcel 15 along Carter's River and lands buffering Triangle and Little Herring Ponds (purchased by Plymouth CPC for conservation)

Run, Herring, Run Superhero Comic creation

Draft Citizen's Nomination of ACEC as nexus for River Herring research and NOAA marine sanctuary designation

Volunteer Herring Count scheduling in partnership with Town of Plymouth at Herring River inlet to Great Herring Pond – 2015 & 2016

Kids Table Activities (Decorate-a- Herring) at annual SEMPBA Pine Fest, Plimoth Plantation Herring Festival, and Fishing Derby, 2014-2016

Outreach session for WAA conference on the Future of Water with PSHS, Tidmarsh Farms, and Plimoth Plantation guest speakers.

Land Protection and Clean-up of Little Herring Pond/Triangle Pond isthmus (voted at Oct 2015 Plymouth Town Mtg. for protective purchase of 43.6 acres by CPC and HPWA donor in Spring 2016.)

Cedarville Steering Committee representation as of 2015 - 2016

Networking as members with Watershed Action Alliance (WAA), Pew Trust's Herring Alliance, and Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance (SEMPBA)

Assisting Town of Plymouth Department of Marine and Environmental Affairs to conduct water quality sampling and watershed priority planning by HPWA, political action for DMEA budgeting, plus association stakeholder fundraising.

Revision and 2nd printing of *Run, Herring, Run* plus newly created *Go, Herring, Go* and accompanying standards-based Activity Guide for free distribution to 125 Nathaniel Morton 3rd graders and 150 Indian Brook 4th graders

Co-sponsored WAA Invasive Species Workshop in Plymouth, May 1, 2016

"About HPWA" and river herring program presented to Sagamore Highlands Association

DIY Rain barrel workshop

Working with SEMPBA on Pine Barrens Partnership, Big Thicket National Wildlife Refuge, and to develop a Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP)