



Newsletter

Fall 2012

Volume 3, Issue 3

Association Leaders

Brian Harrington,
President
Dave Clark, Vice
President
John Foye, Treasurer
Rali Esterman, Secretary
Ken Cannon & Kate von
Goeler, Webmasters
Paula Kuketz, Water
Safety Committee
John Foye, Membership
Committee
Geri Williams,
Newsletter Editor
Lee Pulis, Education and
Outreach Committee
Eb von Goeler, Water
Quality Committee
Marleen von Goeler,
Program Committee

Website

TheHerringPondsWatershed.org



At our August general meeting President Brian Harrington presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Kim Tower of the Plymouth Environmental Management Office for all her support

Watershed Stewardship

Brian Harrington, President

Our small organization has made some extraordinary achievements in its short life, but our challenge - nurturing the well-being of our watershed - remains huge. Yes, we are encouraged to see recent improvements of water quality in our lakes and streams, but the watershed remains fragile and vulnerable - conditions could change in a brief inconsiderate moment, or slowly through slippage of the environmental stewardship we and others foster.

An important goal of the HPWA is to keep our Members and our local population informed about our watershed environment and how we can respectfully live in it. Your membership fees help us to do that. Improved and more wide spread mindfulness, is a key to protecting our precious resources. Over its short life, your HPWA has consistently promoted improved awareness of all citizens about shared responsibilities for living in our watershed. Quite simply, inconsiderate actions - whether done knowingly or unknowingly - will affect us all. One 'target' your Executive Committee has long held is to find ways to raise awareness of measures we can all take in our daily living to reduce possible damage we might cause to our watershed. Do you know that your choice of a lawn fertilizer can make a difference? What

about maintenance of your septic system? (Is it a matter of 'out of sight, out of mind?') Your choices of dishwasher/laundry soap can make a difference. And how? ...We hope you might ask.

We are proud that our past newsletters have provided lots of suggestions for 'considerate' living with our streams and ponds (and with our neighbors!). But we also are excited that the A.D. Makepeace Neighborhood Fund (and an anonymous donor) have provided funding that will lead to an informative booklet about living in our watershed. Within a year this brochure will be mailed to most of our watershed homes, reaching far beyond our small membership base.

Hopefully, this traditional 'information highway' --delivered by postal carriers-- will reach families who may not even know what a 'watershed' is, much less, have an understanding of how their actions can affect the watershed we share together.

Our hope is that the steady efforts of our Association will help keep our Herring Ponds Watershed the beautiful and fun place to live that we all enjoy today. With determination, we can and must be responsible to pass the fun and joy we so love to our successive generations.

If you subscribe to this view, help us to continue our 'mountainous' mission -- we still have lots of peaks to climb, and our safety ropes must be firmly linked!

Safety Concern – Cold Shock

From Paula Kuketz, Water Safety Committee

MA State regulations require life jackets be worn between October 15th and May 1st.

Cold water removes heat from the body 25 times faster than cold air. Survival time can be reduced to minutes. Strong swimmers have died before swimming 100 yards in cold water. Exposure of the head and chest to cold water causes sudden increases in heart rate and blood pressure that may result in cardiac arrest.

Without a life jacket, a victim may inhale while under water (involuntary gasping reflex) and drown without coming back to the surface. Only you can prevent a tragedy by wearing a life jacket at all times in the off-season while on the water. There is no second chance.

Herring Ponds Wampanoag Tribe

By Rali Esterman, Secretary

On October 1 the HPWA held its final general membership meeting for 2012. The program was presented by Troy Currence, Medicine Man, and Hazel Harding Currence, elder and Clan Mother, of the Herring Ponds Wampanoag Tribe, who came to discuss the tribe's history and current activities.

Troy Currence began with a brief history of the Herring Ponds Tribe, which is the smallest tribe of Wampanoag. Long ago, the tribe, once known as Comassakumkanit, had homelands covering an area including Plymouth, Bourne, Wareham, and Sandwich, headed by a sagamore or sachem known as Caunacum. While the tribe's area has been reduced to lands between Plymouth and Bourne and currently has no chief, it has a tribal council, holds meetings in its recently regained Meeting House on Long Pond Road, and is closely interconnected with and shares events, socials, and powwows with the federally recognized tribes in Mashpee and Aquinnah.

Troy described the tribe's involvement with the Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) Language Reclamation Project, which was founded by Jessie Little Doe Baird and was featured in the PBS documentary "We Still Live Here."

While there had been no fluent speaker of the Wampanoag language for 150 years, the organization is working to revive the language and conducts classes for tribe members. More information is available at www.wlrp.org. A particular highlight later in the program was listening to Troy speak in Wampanoag.

Troy presented a brief summary of the tribe's history, from initial good relations with the pilgrims, the granting of permission for the settlement of areas by the English, to Richard Bourne's "praying towns" and King Philip's War. He made note of

the fact that Thanksgiving is a sad time for many Native Americans as they mourn the losses colonization has caused their culture.

The program was followed by a question and answer session, during which Troy described the importance of the watershed to the Herring Pond Tribe for fishing, traveling, and as burial grounds. Attention was called to the fact that at the upcoming canal celebration in 2014, the tribe would like to see acknowledgement of the Native American encampment, trails, and burial grounds that were dug up in the creation of the canal. In addition, he reminded everyone that if anyone discovers a burial ground during construction, they must stop digging and notify the authorities.

Troy elaborated upon his role as Medicine Man. As an elected, traditional leader, he is responsible for keeping everyone in the tribe's spirits positive and healthy. He brings attention to problems that need to be addressed and holds ceremonies in times of sickness, sadness, death, and celebration. He is also involved in educational and cultural activities for young people, including language and science camps based in Mashpee. Videotaped excerpts of the program will be made available on the HPWA website.

Meet our Bryozoans.

by Eb von Goeler

One Sunday morning a few weeks back, I had just sat down with a cup of tea and the Globe, when the door bell rang. On answering it, I found Bob McDonald, one of my neighbors, standing with a black trash bag, obviously heavy, under his arm. Putting the bag down he said: I want to show you something I caught when I was fishing from my dock yesterday. Peeking inside the bag I saw a big dripping mass. No head, no tail, though. That mass was the size and shape of a cheese wheel, except it was translucent gelatinous, a chunk with

diameter about 8 – 10 inches, and thickness just a little bit less. The surface was covered with blackish-brownish spots. The gelatin was not soft and wobbly and easy to poke holes in, but very sturdy, tough and a bit slimy. I remembered that when I was diving from our dock I had occasionally seen similar objects attached to a rock or a tree trunk, but much smaller. Did I know what it was, Bob asked. I had heard of salamander egg masses – but this thing was clearly far too big for that. So – no, I had no idea whatsoever. Bob had a little yellow slip in his hand, with the word "bryozoans" written on it. I did a search on my computer, he said, and this is what I came up with. Then we discussed for a while how to get rid of it. Should he throw it back into the water? We decided it might be safer to dispose of it with the trash. And then he left, and I can still kick myself for not taking a quick few pictures first. I rushed to my computer, where I found other pictures, none of them as spectacular as the thing Bob had pulled out of the water, and some information. Bryozoans are little animals, less than 1 mm, that live in colonies, in these gelatinous balls. They are probably related to corals, except they don't build hard calcite structures. They consume algae and unicellular microorganisms floating in the water. They are said to be benign. Isn't it stunning what you can discover, if you only keep your eyes and your mind open, as Bob McDonald obviously did.



Internet photo of Bryozoans

Makepeace Neighborhood Fund Grant Project

by Lee Pulis, Education and Outreach

If at first you don't succeed, try again! We took that advice and this year were awarded a \$2000 grant from the A. D. Makepeace Co.'s *Makepeace Neighborhood Fund*. This grant, plus a generous match from a summer resident on Great Herring Pond, will help us print and mail 1000 twenty-page booklets to promote awareness and stewardship education within households in HPWA's Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Our Education and Outreach Committee begins this month to plan and draft the content for production and mailing in Spring 2013.

Our inspiration is the 60-page *Orleans Blue Pages* produced by the Orleans Pond Coalition in 2008. You can download and view the publication in PDF format (11.4 MB) at <http://www.orleanspondcoalition.org/OrleansBluePages.html>. OPC is providing digital templates, artwork, and copyright permissions, but considerable work remains to customize the information and message for our unique freshwater watershed.

Our all-volunteer project will involve research, writing, artwork, photography, mapmaking, editing, proofing, and mail addressing. In addition we will devise and implement several indices of project evaluation to quantify the positive effects of this effort for our own decision-making, as well as for funder reporting. If you would like to get in on the ground floor of this important project, the committee begins planning in October, and ramping up efforts through fall and winter. Contact committee chair Lee Pulis lee@theherringpondswatershed.org with questions, or to offer your resources, expertise, or time.



MAKEPEACE
NEIGHBORHOOD FUND

Grant Agreement

The Makepeace Neighborhood Fund hereby awards a grant to the Herring Ponds Watershed Association, ("Grantee") in the amount of \$2000. for "Herring Ponds Watershed Awareness Education," subject to the following terms and conditions.

Waste Water Wisdom

A new feature in our newsletter will be questions asked by our readers about septic systems with Dave Clark, an expert in this area, answering. You can submit a question to him at dave@herringpondswatershed.org

Q. The folks who pumped our septic tank last year are sending me notices that it is time to pump it again. Does my system need to be pumped each year?

A. No, most likely your system does not need to be pumped yet. The conventional thinking suggests that an average system be pumped at about three years. There are many factors that determine when a system should be pumped. The amount, and type, of usage is the key. A household consisting of two adults practicing good habits with regards to food waste in the kitchen could go for five years or more between pumping. A properly working system holds waste in the septic tank long enough for the active bacteria to "digest" the solids thereby discharging only liquids to the soil absorption system. Over time there can be a build up of sludge at the bottom of the septic tank and a scum layer on the top of the water. These two layers effectively lessen the volume of the tank and shorten the retention time for digest of solids. If the scum layer gets too thick, there can be carryover of solids to the soil absorption system causing eventual failure. I recommend that homeowners learn where their system components are located and periodically check the septic tank buildup. This is a relatively easy, but smelly, process but it can save hundreds of dollars in pumping costs.



Molly & Tom Clark recognized for their volunteer efforts.

Help Us to Grow

By John B. Foye, Membership Chair

One of the best ways to introduce your neighbors and friends to our association is to direct them to our web-site:

www.theherringpondswatershed.org

Our web-site has been a source of information for many interested parties with over 750 hits in the last month alone. We now have more up-to-date content for all to view and use. Our web site is easy to use and has a menu that will guide you through each area of our association. Special interest areas such as Newsletter archives, Long term Water Quality Testing Results and a Photo Gallery of the ponds and environmental projects such as our Rain Barrel Project may peak your interest.

Help us expand our membership by sending your neighbors and friends to our web-site or by recruiting them into our watershed association. Let them know of our associations effort to protect and preserve our precious watershed area.

www.theherringpondswatershed.org is there for all to use and contribute to. Please use the application below to expand our membership.

HPWA Membership Application

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

HPWA BOATING POLICY

The following clarification is aimed at any possible misunderstanding regarding The Herring Ponds Watershed Association's position on boating.

The Herring Ponds Watershed Association has no agenda with regards to further limiting the use of our "fully recreational" pond. If I thought that there was an agenda to limit full recreational use of the pond, I would not be a member and an officer. Our involvement is summed up in the statement below from the Water Safety Committee.

Water Safety Committee is dedicated to promoting water safety for boaters and swimmers, by distributing town watercraft by-laws and other information pertinent to the safe operation of all forms of watercraft on the ponds.

Our mission is not enforcement, or the potential elimination of any boating activity, but to advocate for the safe enjoyment of the ponds' environment by all.

The Water Safety Committee strongly urges any citizens concerned with potential safety issues on the pond to inform the proper authorities, i.e.: Police, Harbormaster, or State Environmental Police for appropriate action.

It is only for the convenience and education of our members that we have posted links to various law enforcement agencies. It is strictly up to the individual who feels that some law is being broken and/or there is a serious safety concern to contact the proper authority.

For further insight as to what we are all about please visit our web site at: www.theherringpondswatershed.org and read "ABOUT US".

Dave Clark
Vice President



Capturing Rain Drops – Reducing Unfiltered Runoff

At the August 11, 2012, HPWA Do-it-Yourself-and-Take-it-with-You Rain Barrel Workshop" five 55-gallon poly barrels donated by A. D. Makepeace Co. were converted into rain barrels and sold for \$40 each.

TITLE V BETTERMENT LOAN PROGRAM

by Dave Clark, Vice President

The Town of Plymouth has a loan program in place for the FY-2013 year which may be of interest to anyone considering an upgrade to their septic system. If your system is old, but still functioning, you do not *need* to replace it. However, should you be thinking of selling or remodeling, you may wish to take advantage of this program. If you have had signs of failure, this could be something to take advantage of. The maximum loan amount is \$15,000 and the term can be for 5, 10, or 15 years. This loan is paid back as part of your property tax bill. The current interest rate is 5%.

Only a certain amount of money is set aside each year for this program. Any one interested should contact the Office of Community Development as soon as possible, contact information is: Jim Carpenter, Rehab Specialist
508-747-1620 X149
jcarpenter@townhall.plymouth.ma.us

STORMWATER MITIGATION AT CARTERS BRIDGE ROAD

By Eb von Goeler

Good news! We have just been informed by the Town of Plymouth that it will include upgrading the current stormwater system along Carters Bridge Rd., at the northern end of Great Herring Pond, as part of its road improvement project in this area. The existing system will be cleaned out, sediments in basins and the trunk line will be removed, and oil/water separators will be newly installed. This work will make a significant difference in the quantity and quality of water discharged into the pond. HPWA has, from its beginning, maintained that stormwater runoff may be a serious water pollution problem. We have cooperated with the Town in assessing runoff and the way it may foul the pond waters. We have alerted the Town to locations around the ponds where runoff occurs, and our volunteers have taken runoff water samples in the midst of rainstorms to monitor the pond water contamination caused by these storms. The Carters Bridge area is one of those we have flagged, and we are very grateful that the Town intends to do mitigation work there. The Town has been very responsive to our concerns, as can also be seen from the runoff mitigation work performed over the summer in the Pond Rd./Shore Rd. area along the northwestern shore of Great Herring Pond. There the Town spent around \$200k, partially contributed by a grant from Coastal Zone Management, for an extensive bioretention network to assure that the rainwater ultimately discharged into the pond had significantly reduced contaminants and sediments.

We need volunteers for continuing runoff water collection and pond water sampling. This vital work helps us preserve the cleanliness of our surface and ground water. Our contact number is 508-833-2136, or you can contact us at www.theherringpondswatershed.org

WATER SAMPLING IN THE PONDS

By Eb von Goeler, Chair, Water Quality Committee

We started this program in 2008, collecting water samples three times during that year, from a few surface locations near the shores of Great Herring Pond. Those samples were analyzed by a state licensed laboratory in Sandwich. The program has grown considerably since. At present we collect water samples five times per year from both Great and Little Herring Pond, from the middle of the ponds as well as near the shore, and from the pond bottom as well as the surface. While the laboratory in Sandwich still analyzes the samples, we also have added new instruments to get a broader picture of water quality. Results of our water testing are posted on our web site

www.theherringpondswatershed.org.

Over the years, we have found that some water parameters stay quite constant, but others show large variations. For instance our tests of e-coli show that the counts of these bacteria are consistently low, assuring that both ponds are safe for swimming. The one exception is the test location in the stream at Carters Bridge, where the count is often uncomfortably high. Because the upstream end of Carters River is also sampled and doesn't show high e-coli results, the source of the bacteria must be somewhere along the stream, but we have not yet been able to locate it. The tests of adjacent locations in GHP do not show elevated bacteria counts, so we are not overly concerned.

In contrast to e-coli, our tests of phosphorus have always shown large seasonal and annual variations. An abundance of phosphorus is generally implicated by pond specialists as the prime nutrient fostering aquatic plant and algae growth. Excess of phosphorus has caused serious problems in several ponds in Plymouth. We have been very concerned about the phosphorus results, because our sampling over the last few years indicated that between 2008 and 2011 the average phosphorus count not only was quite high, but also that it might

be increasing from year to year. The attached graph indicates the situation. It shows "average" annual sampling results of phosphorus between 2008 and 2012, and if you have some imagination, you may be able to see the slow annual rise between 2008 and 2011. The graph is not very scientific, average here is poorly defined, for example both GHP and LHP results are included, even though we didn't sample LHP until the end of 2009. Also we didn't test always at the same dates. This graph is intended more as a rough indicator of a trend rather than a precise set of facts. The one thing that stands out as a rather unambiguous result is that 2012 was totally different from the previous years. The phosphorus count is clearly much lower than in earlier years, even at the beginning of our tests in 2008. This is a delightful result, but also a big puzzle. Why are things so startlingly different? I don't know, all I can say - let's wait till we look at sampling results next year. It should now be obvious that this kind of sampling needs to be done over many years in order to see long term trends.

Our last two sampling events, on July 2 and August 27, are included in the attached graph. Our next sampling event will take place on October 19, if the weather is favorable. If you want to look more comprehensively at the sampling, all our data are posted on our web site, so you can derive your own deductions. I hope you will consider joining us in our work. We really need additional volunteers to participate in our projects. Please contact me at our web site or at 508-833-2136 if you would like to join us.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE WATERSHED

by Marleen von Goeler

In August the Massachusetts Legislature passed an Act that will reduce the amount of phosphorus runoff entering our ponds, polluting them and stimulating algal blooms. These blooms have been on the rise in State ponds, and their related toxins can have potentially serious health and ecological effects.

The new State law restricts the use of fertilizer products containing phosphorus in areas that are most likely to cause environmental degradation through runoff. Retailers who sell fertilizer products must sell products containing phosphorus separate from non-phosphorus products and must post signs outlining usage rules. The law does permit use of fertilizers with phosphorus when soil tests show that it is needed for growth, e.g. on new lawns or for agricultural use.

This new legislation serves several good purposes. It improves the health of our ponds, rivers and streams. It allows us to meet standards set by the EPA, and it reduces the cost municipalities must pay to remove phosphorus from storm water and wastewater.

Credit goes to Representative John Fernandes and Senator Richard Moore for filing the legislation.

