

# Wellfleet National Seashore Homeowners Association

## Annual Meeting Minutes – July 29, 2012

Susanna Deiss, President, opened the meeting.

“Gooz” Griswold Draz, Vice President, presented the treasurers report in lieu of the Treasurer who was not able to be present. He reported that there was \$3,475 in the association account.

There was a motion to approve the Minutes which were approved

There was a motion to reconfirm and extend the term of Executive Committee members Daniel Arons, Penelope Jenks, and Peter Watts. The motion was approved.

There was a motion to approve new Executive Committee Members Teresa Parker and Edward Miller which was approved.

### The Wellfleet Ponds: Management and Conservation.

Presentations by Ned Hitchcock of the Natural Resources Advisory Board (NRAB) and Suzanne Thomas, the Wellfleet Town Beach Administrator.

Ned made the first presentation on the NRAB Ponds Management Plan. He said the plan took a couple of years and included public feedback and was submitted to the Wellfleet Board of Selectman. He said it was a start on how to manage the ponds.

He first gave an overview of the NRAB ponds management plan which he said focused on the kettle ponds, great ponds, and the key issues of water quality and shoreline management and emphasized the role the town and town management. He said there were four chapters that addressed human impact, water quality, the shoreline and major public use. The larger themes were: the water environment, developing a long term perspective, historical uses, and issues of public access. The over-riding theme was “we may be loving our ponds to death”. He noted that the ponds serve many uses, are important to tourism and their popularity leads to overuse. There needs to be a balance between use and preservation. He said there are no simple guidelines but it important to keep in mind that it is easier to prevent damage than to remediate. The challenge is to maintain a healthy balance between use and preservation.

He explained that the ponds are glacial remnants and that there are two types of ponds: perched ponds which are very ancient and have “closed” clay bottoms and others filled in more recently over “ridge” of fresh water that rides over the underlying salt water table. He said all the ponds are rain fed and the only pond with an outlet is Herring Pond. The water and underlying land of the “great” ponds (those over 10 acres) are owned and controlled the Commonwealth and the towns have the responsibility to take care of them. Smaller ponds are owned by shoreline owners.

He reported that the current status of the ponds is that they are in reasonable shape and do not have some of the issues of ponds in areas such as Eastham with much higher population around the ponds. The ponds are generally clear due to low nitrogen and phosphate input and there is no coliform contamination. He noted, though that the ponds have long flush time (10 yrs) and thus do not have the capacity to clean themselves efficiently. There are no serious nutrient problems yet, but there are problems with airborne pollutions such as mercury.

The major concerns are: shoreline erosion and degradation of water clarity due to erosions (silt). Planning and remediation efforts are under way.

Ned presented the recommendations of the NRAB plan and a handout was available. He said the recommendations include things we need to change and things we need to continue doing. Changes included: monitor for erosion; shoreline repairs; maintain naturally vegetated borders (manicured lawns bad); educate users on shoreline risk; enforce parking,(chapt 91 and other regs); repair and define paths and parking; manage parking related overuse; review water quality and be prepared to act; and remind abutters on steps to preserve water quality.

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Things to keep doing include: maintain toilets; prohibit dogs from ponds; limit kayak and canoe use (especially at Gull Pond); no boat mooring; coordinate with the National Seashore. The NRAB Ponds Management Plan is available online by going to the Town of Wellfleet website and going to “plans and studies, then Pond Management Plan ([http://www.wellfleetma.org/public\\_documents/wellfleetma\\_PlansStudies/index](http://www.wellfleetma.org/public_documents/wellfleetma_PlansStudies/index)) where the plan is accessible along with a number of other resources on the ponds and other issues.

Suzanne Thomas, Wellfleet Town Beach Administrator, made the next presentation on Wellfleet Ponds: Management and Conservation. She said the town had met with CCNS and NRAB to discuss the ponds and explained that the ponds do not belong to anyone entity entirely. The town owns the water, underlying land and landings while the CCNS or individuals (for some of the smaller ponds) owns the land around ponds. They have all been working with Sophia Fox, a scientist with CCNS, to come up with a triage plan. They have been using a Secchi disk to measure the water clarity.

This summer project is Duck Pond which has a problem with sediment from the path which has formed into a gully. There has also been a parking encroachment problem and actions are to limit and define these areas are being taken including: fencing to protect trees/roots, defining the areas and moving the toilet. She also discussed fencing across power lines to prevent off roading and has been working with NSTAR on this.

Next summer project will be the sluiceway. She said the town has decided not to renew the boat lease at Gull Pond to give time to remediate the banks. They are monitoring to assure compliance with terms of contract and have found they are complying. Lots of kayaks and other water craft land at sluiceway. The town is revisiting the deal with NPS and the town will shut parking July and August. Remediation of the banks will require money for consultant and to execute and will take two to three years to resolve. Signs don't work because people don't read them. Need volunteers to come up to people and educate them.

### Impact of Federal Budget Cuts on the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Presentation by George Price, Superintendent of the Cape Cod National Seashore

Mr Price said the leading topic of the presentation would be the ponds and the theme of “loving our parks to death”. He said there is a dichotomy between the Parks mission to both preserve the natural resources and to provide access to the public and the Park works to find a balance between these two. He said the CCNS works closely with the Ponds committee and proposed reviving the volunteer corp to interface with visitors to educate them about issues such as seals.

Seashore science group has been testing the pond and has 30 yrs of data on them which documents water quality and compositions and the condition of the pond bottoms. Mercury contamination in the sediment is a big issue throughout New England and dozen of ponds have warnings. This impacts the larger fish especially.

He then discussed the Long Pond proposal to create a public beach area at the former Downs property which has reverted to the Park. At first it seemed the type of place to close and restore but there was some pleas made to keep open and the Park decided to do put forth a pilot proposal to keep open. The idea was to see if there was a way to keep as pocket park similar to Spectacle Pond with limited parking and self-regulated. If the project did not work the Park would shut it down and let revert to nature. There was lots of negative feedback when the proposal was presented to the Conservation Commission. People were not confident about regulating use and monitoring. Mr Price emphasized that it would be a pilot project and stated that parking would not be included in the plan. The Park is now developing “plan B” that would allow pedestrian and bike access but is not in position now to share next steps.

### Questions and comments from the audience re the ponds:

- Can people get mercury poisoning from swimming? Response: no. Poisoning comes from ingesting contaminated food.
- How many porta potties are there? – none now.
- How to deal with human need to relieve and potential for pollution? Suzanne responded that once parking is removed the town hoped to put in toilet. Suggested this to be agenda for Ponds Committee.

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- Could composting toilets be used for places like Dyer Pond which lack facilities? Mr Price said Park had many problems with composting toilets at Boston Center. They only work under right conditions and require intensive monitoring and maintenance.
- Has there been a study of ponds such as Long Pond to measure changes over time such as loss of wildlife and fishlife and increase of algae? What other things have been studied? GP suggested a panel discussion with scientists. He said the one item studied, sediment is as low tech as you can get. He said scientist have extensive data and to send email to remind him to get info from Dr Fox. He saw an opportunity for forum to discuss these issues.
- The Gull Pond Area Conservation Association thanked the NPS for help and urged others to contact and work with NPS. Suggested two relatively easy and effective actions to take: ban on fertilizers for all properties that abut water; and any properties that abut water would need to upgrade septic systems to title V.
- There was an objection to parking at Spectacle pond and recommendation to have walking access only.
- How can towns such as Eastham that has a significant pond pollution problem share info and work together? GP suggested that committee take initiative.
- There was concern about erosion and misuse at Long Pond. GP said that exists everywhere and the NPS job is to monitor and regulate. He said he would still call it a pilot with opportunity to shut down.
- There was a suggestion to have written signage combined with verbal and to have well worded and effective signs. GP remarked that the number one problem is bike accidents and that the Park has put up strongly worded signs to warn bicyclists.
- What is process for Plan B? First will work with staff if to go ahead with plan B, then go to Conservation Committee and will include public comment.
- How to control cigarette butts? Public education also need to understand danger of glass bottles which started two fires this year.
- How get involved as volunteers? Work with Ned, Ponds Committee, through town communication vehicles, Gull Pond assoc, Long Pond group.
- Adopt a Pond group. NE environmentals award. Pick a favorite pond.
- How will Plan B for Long Pond assure that plan and actual use are the same. In past what intended has not been what has occurred. Would it be better to manage existing locations and put moratorium on more access until can effectively manage? Mr Price responded that the town has a management plan and NPS is working with town. He said that Long Pond was not a new use but rather a plan to manage and define a traditional use. If Park was to develop a new beach that would be new use.
- Is there a manual of best practices? It is a continual improvement issue. Spectacle Pond was allowed to slip.
- There was a suggestion for a workshop for kids to make signs and a comment on how much impact boats have bringing in foreign species such as Eurasian Milfoil and suggestion for requirement for washing of boats.
- There was expression of interest in volunteerism and the Parks said willing to support.

Mr Price addressed some other topics:

Herring River: the restoration has utilized most number of scientists of all National Park projects. There is now a draft Environmental Impact Statement. Many groups involved and the Park has worked with the Board of Selectmen and there have been Public meetings.

Fed Budget: The CCNS is part of ex branch and the Department of the Interior. It is a very minute part of the national budget. In the last few years has been level funded and expect to be level funded next year. Friends of National Seashore have helped to support CCNS.

Houses in the National Seashore: There has been criticism about the number allowed to deteriorate. There are now 600 private parcels and 300 structures that NPS owns of which 75 are for park housing. There are 3 vacant on Long Pond. The demolition of deteriorating houses has been stymied by the Modern House issue. There needs to be sign off from an array of organizations and agencies to prove no historic connection. Have demolished about 15 structures. This year received list of 12 houses

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considered modern. The Park works with CCMHT to restore and maintain. They are now evaluating which are ok to take down which are salvageable or need to be destroyed. CCNS has been working with town on issues related to houses to maintain the seashore character and integrity. Zoning regs are often open to interpretation. Mr Price discussed several examples including the house in Prince Valley Road in Truro and the Blass house.

Seaside erosion. There was 80 feet of erosion last year. This is due to the dynamics with barrier reef morphology and the breach of the barrier reef.

Hunting. There will be a spring turkey hunt.

Shore bird management plan: The plan may or may not be ready for public discussion this spring. The focus is on predator management (crows, coyote and fox). The health of Piping Plover population is measured by numbers and productivity. The Roseatte tern and Red Knot do not nest, but stage on Cape.

Mr Price concluded by saying he strongly believed in the connection between adults and youth and the physical and psychological benefits of youth having an outdoor experience. He recommended the book, Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv.

The meeting was adjourned.