



**Salt Ponds
Coalition**

The Tidal Page

News of the Rhode Island Salt Ponds

www.saltpondscoalition.org

Official Watershed Council for the Salt Ponds

Spring 2013



Photo by Tom Tetzner

Spring is Finally Here! The Ponds Need Us to be Good Neighbors

Greetings and happy spring! Now that the weather is finally warming up, many of us are working hard making our yards presentable again after the long, rough winter. If one of your neighbors happens to be a salt pond, you may be wondering what you can do to help keep the pond healthy while creating a beautiful lawn and garden.

We all appreciate clean, clear pond waters. However, nutrients that enter the ponds cause excess phytoplankton growth which clouds the water and can cause issues with low dissolved oxygen.

There are actually actions we can take to minimize our contribution of

nutrients to the ponds. We have discussed pond stewardship before, but it is helpful to revisit these topics from time to time as a refresher and to spread the word to our newer members.

In the center pages of this issue of The Tidal Page, we discuss a number of ways in which you can be a good neighbor to a salt pond. These include thoughtful and restrained use of fertilizers, picking up after pets, discouraging geese, and capturing rainwater runoff before it reaches the pond.

Having sown the seeds of stewardship, we now branch off into other topics and leave the rest to you!

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New SPC Website is Live!

SPC is pleased to introduce our new, completely rebuilt website! The cold winter months are always a good time to freshen things up, and our website was overdue for a makeover.

Most of the very useful and informative content from our old website has been moved into our new site, and much new content has been added. You will find breaking news, an events calendar, information about SPC, information about the history and ecology of the ponds, maps and guides (including our wonderful new Blueways paddling maps), information on how you can be a pond steward, PDFs of all of our newsletters (The Tidal Page) back through 2007 with helpful indices and pictures of the front page, photos, links to other informative sites, links to our partners' sites, and (of course) all of our

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Oyster Aquaculture in the Salt Ponds

By Art Ganz

Recently, there has been a lot of controversy and misunderstanding regarding shellfish aquaculture in the salt ponds. Opposition to aquaculture leases usually revolves around the lease location and conflicting uses. Rhode Island is the smallest state and one of the most densely populated, so user conflicts around the bay, coastal waters and salt ponds are numerous. It is paramount that state regulators know the waterways in order to guide potential aquaculturists away from areas used for navigation, recreational and commercial fishing, mooring fields, and areas set aside for natural resource restoration and fisheries management.

Shellfish aquaculture is a form of husbandry. The stock is planted and grown in a protected area to be either used to restore depleted resources or to be harvested for

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Message From Our President

Dear Members,

Like all of you, I can't wait for this winter to end. Over the past months we have endured superstorm Sandy, Nor'easters with extended power outages, and perhaps the worst public relations mess that I've seen since retirement.



SPC President Art Ganz and Executive Director Elise Torello (safely on the other side of the camera) checked for damage in Green Hill Pond after superstorm Sandy. Art managed to get his point across that day!

Communities are working to recover from Sandy. Town roads are being restored, storm debris is slowly getting cleaned up, homes and buildings are being repaired. The amount of tree damage is incredible and both government and private property owners have a long way to go to remove that mess.

Our southern RI towns are working hard to restore their infrastructure and shorelines before the summer residents and tourists arrive. Several community efforts are worth noting. There is a big volunteer effort to remove debris from the bottom and shores of Winnapaug Pond. I will report about a local effort in Quonochontaug to restore and stabilize the beachfront. Beach restoration projects are occurring along the length of the shoreline.

Within the month, the state under the coordination of URI and CRMC will begin the Rhode Island Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan (Beach SAMP). This will develop a coast-wide policy and strategy for community planning and infrastructure to address changes resulting from sea-level rise and storms. Salt Ponds Coalition will be an active participant in the project. We will report progress along the way, and we will ask local fire districts and neighborhoods for your input and concerns.

At the recent Land and Water Summit at URI, one of the speakers warned the conservation groups to "tell your story or someone else will tell it for you." This will be our theme for 2013. One of the two major components of our mission is education, and based on the events surrounding aquaculture siting proposal, we need to be doing a much better job of educating our members and communities. Elise has updated our website which will be easier to navigate and we have engaged Constant Contact to allow us to send email blasts to notify the membership of timely events or response. I urge you all to take advantage of the website, which contains significant information on issues that affect the salt ponds and our lives.

Finally, I wish to thank Mark Bullinger, our out-going Executive Director for his service to Salt Ponds Coalition. Mark has been the great communicator which has brought our newsletter to a high standard. He has been the smiling face leading our children on seaside safaris and been a great friend and helper to all of us. We wish him good luck in his new job at the Weekapaug Inn, and look forward to his continued relationship with SPC.

Art Ganz, President



Salt Ponds Coalition

The Salt Ponds Coalition stands up for the health and sustainable use of the southern Rhode Island salt ponds. SPC is the only organization whose sole charter is to monitor and protect these unique resources.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

Email:

saltpondscoalition@gmail.com

Mailing address

PO Box 875
Charlestown, RI 02813

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Tidal Page Editing
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Thank You, Pondwatchers!

As we gear up for our 28th water quality monitoring season, we at SPC want to take this opportunity to once again thank our intrepid and dedicated pondwatchers for their efforts on behalf of our ponds! Every two weeks from mid-May through mid-October, they diligently go out by foot, kayak, or boat to monitor our salt pond waters for temperature, dissolved

oxygen, chlorophyll-a, bacteria, and nutrients. Our Executive Director and many of our Board of Directors members are also pondwatchers, so we understand what a commitment this is for you.

Please remember: SAFETY FIRST! If there is any doubt in your mind whether conditions are safe enough to sample, please do not go out! Samples can be col-

lected another day-- just contact Roy Jeffrey to let him know.

Again, we thank you so much for your time and efforts. Have fun, and see you on the water!



And, Thank you, Mark and Nancy!

Mark Bullinger is leaving as Executive Director (ED) of SPC to, as he says, "complete the circle" at the Weekapaug Inn, where he will be the Naturalist/Recreation Director. Mark grew up spending summers in Weekapaug, and his first job as a teenager was at the Inn. He went



on to study in the hospital-ity field, then worked in corporate America in the Boston area for years.

When he

and his family moved to Westerly, Mark joined SPC as a Board member and later as ED. The mission of SPC grew, and thanks to a grant from the RI Foundation, Mark's position became full time. I call Mark the great communicator because both his writing and presentations were clear and informative for all audiences. We thank Mark for his hard work and dedication guiding SPC to a higher level.

We are also sorry to report that Nancy Zabel will be leaving our Board after many wonderful years of service. Along with being our Secretary for seven years, Nancy has been our Kettle Pond Visitor Center volunteer coordinator. Our office is sup-

ported by a minimal cash rent plus 15 hours per month of volunteer time at the Kettle Pond



Visitor Center. Nancy and her faithful volunteers have "banked" hundreds of hours manning the information desk and store. Nancy has and will continue to be a great supporter of Salt Ponds Coalition. With our heartfelt thanks, we wish her well on her upcoming travel plans.

-Art Ganz, SPC President

Events:

Please visit www.saltpondscoalition.org and click the "Calendar" button for more details!

Kayak Trips

Join us for some exploring! Please arrive at least 15 minutes before launch time. Paddlers must wear life jackets and provide their own gear. We will cancel if the weather is unsafe or unpleasant. Call 401-322-3068 or email saltpondscoalition@gmail.com for more information.

Sat. June 29: Point Judith Pond

9 AM launch at the Marina Park ramp just off Rt. 1 in Wakefield. Rain date 6/30. Free.

Sat. July 27: Ninigret Pond

9 AM launch at the US Fish & Wildlife access in Ninigret Park. Rain date 7/28. Free.

Friday August 23: Row & Glow

7 PM launch at US Fish & Wildlife access in Ninigret Park to watch comb jellies glow. Bring a flashlight or head lamp; preregister at www.wpwa.org. \$10 memb/\$20 non-memb

Salt Pond Safaris

Introduce the children in your life to the wonders of salt pond critters! Safaris meet at the US Fish & Wildlife access in Ninigret Park and generally last about 1.5 hours. Call 401-322-3068 or email saltpondscoalition@gmail.com for more information and to register. Free.

Saturday July 20th, 10 AM
Saturday August 17th, 10 AM



Annual Pizza Fundraiser

Our renowned al fresco wood oven pizza fundraiser is always a wonderful evening. The event is hosted by George and Cathy Hill in their beautiful gardens, just a few minutes east of Charlestown Beach Rd. Space is limited for this event and the cost is \$50 per ticket.

Thursday July 11th, 5 - 8 PM
(Rain date Friday July 12)

SPC Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting is held on the third Monday in August at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center in Charlestown. Check www.saltpondscoalition.org for more details, including who our speaker will be.

Monday August 19th, 7 PM

"Beach SAMP" Project Moving Ahead, Introduced to the Public

The coastline of RI has always been dynamic. Lately, thanks to super-storm Sandy, "the blizzard," and several nor'easters, we have seen severe coastal erosion, recurrent flooding, and dune destruction. As our coastal communities continue to clean up and try to restore the shoreline, we all know that the next bad storm may un-do all of these efforts.

With ongoing and possibly accelerating sea level rise, plus potentially more frequent and/or severe pounding by storms

due to climate change, the State of RI has decided that the time has come to plan for dealing with our rapidly changing coastline. The Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and RI Sea Grant are moving ahead with development of a Shoreline Change Special Area Management Plan, or "Beach SAMP." This is an effort to be proactive about mitigating and adapting to short-term and long-term changes to our coastline, instead of reactive (operating in "crisis-mode").

According to CRMC, the Beach SAMP will enhance existing policies related to erosion and inundation issues and also develop new, innovative policies and adaptation tools. The goal is for these policies to be publicly supported and implemented at the state and local levels. Project leaders are planning on a transparent process which acknowledges existing coastal uses; extensive public education and outreach are planned throughout.

The development of this SAMP will involve using historic shoreline change rates, new and detailed shoreline surveys, ongoing coastal research, and inundation modeling to identify areas of critical concern--that is, where public and private property and infrastructure are at risk. Tools and techniques for sound decision-making and effective and adaptive management of the shoreline will be evaluated and recommended.



The same cottage viewed from the west, September 2012, pre-Sandy (photo by E. Torello).

This will be a multi-year, collaborative effort using the best current science on these challenging coastal issues. In addition to CRMC and RI Sea Grant, the URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences, municipalities, state agencies, and other private and non-profit stakeholders will be included in the process. The project will proceed in three phases: Phase 1 includes the south shore of RI and Block Island; Phase 2 is Narragansett Bay; and Phase 3 includes the south and east shores of Aquidneck Island and Little Compton.

On April 4th, the Beach SAMP "kickoff meeting" was held at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography. The meeting was very well-attended, which shows how interested and concerned people are about the issues facing our coastline. SPC is already an active participant in the development of this important SAMP, and we will keep you posted about its progress in the months ahead.



The red-trimmed "Browning Cottage" in early September 2012 viewed from the east (top, photo by E. Torello) and post-Sandy (photo by T. Tetzner). The sand-filled coir logs (or "burritos") were no match for the severe storm surge and waves of Sandy.

New Website and 2012 Sampling Data are Online!

Continued from front page 1

water quality data dating back to 1985.

You can join SPC, renew your membership, or make a donation using the yellow "Support SPC" button on our home page. Donations are made through PayPal, but you do not need to have a PayPal account to donate.

Speaking of water quality data, our 2012 data are now online! These data are presented at two levels of detail: as highly summarized Aquatic Health Index (AHI) maps (one or two per pond)

and as much more detailed reports for each sampling parameter measured at each site. The AHI maps are printable JPGs, while the more detailed data reports (over 1200 of them!) are printable PDFs. These PDFs are accessed through a Google Map which is linked to our website.

Please pay a visit to our new website at the same address as the old website: www.saltpondscoalition.org, and let us know what you think--thank you!



Oyster Aquaculture

Continued from front page 1

food. While working for DEM, I used a variety of techniques to restore depleted wild shellfish beds statewide. Areas in Ninigret, Quonnie, and Winnapaug Ponds, called spawner sanctuaries, were established for resource enhancement. In recent years SPC, partners, and many volunteers have continued this restoration effort.

A Bit of Oyster Biology

Oysters are bivalve mollusks, relatives of quahaugs, steamer clams and scallops. Oysters grow best in high salinity water but reproduce best in low salinity water. They spawn in the late spring then undergo several embryonic stages as part of the zooplankton for roughly two weeks. When they reach their final stage, they settle (set) on the bottom, preferably on a hard rock or shell surface. Adult oysters are capable of pumping 30+ gallons of water per day, from which they filter-feed on phytoplankton (small plants). Oysters hibernate during the winter, and during the “R” months they fatten themselves for winter – making September through December the best time to harvest them.



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Narragansett Bay Oyster Industry

For centuries, the American oyster industry has involved gathering juvenile (seed) oysters from lower salinity waters and transplanting them to high salinity leased growing areas. During the 1800s and early 1900s close to ¼ of Narragansett Bay was leased to 27 oyster companies. Seed was gathered from Connecticut estuaries, loaded on schooners and planted in Narragansett Bay. When harvested, the oysters were shucked and sold. Huge piles of empty oyster shells were loaded aboard the schooners and dumped in Connecticut estuaries as cultch to attract a new set. The oyster industry was a major employer in RI

until its demise from a series of events including the depression, wars, and the hurricane of '38.

Modern Oyster Farming

Today's oyster farmers in RI are relatively small one- or two-man operations, occupying three or four acres each. Oyster seed is purchased from commercial shellfish hatcheries since none exist in RI (except at Roger Williams University). Seed coming into RI is tested for disease before planting. The small seed is usually grown in an up-weller system until it is plantable size. Oyster grow-out is done in a series of bags in cages located along the bottom of the leased area. Depending on the water depth, the cages are two or more feet below the surface, with nothing showing at the surface except the four corner buoys marking the lease. Oysters are continually graded, and bags and cages are routinely cleaned because of fouling. Workers usually work from a small boat during the day.

Siting Aquaculture Leases

The premise of aquaculture is to take a non-productive area and make it produce. One cannot simply lay claim to a rich natural shellfish bed. State biologists should always survey the grounds under consideration to be sure that they do not contain a significant shellfish resource. About five years ago CRMC met with local officials and stakeholders to develop a series of use maps for each of the state's waterways. These maps showed areas where fishing, navigation, mooring fields, fairways, and



Rob Krause of Ninigret Oyster Farm describes his oyster aquaculture operation in Ninigret Pond to kayakers on a SPC-guided paddle.

significant resource areas existed statewide, including in the coastal salt ponds.



Usually the CRMC aquaculture coordinator and the aquaculture applicant meet with town officials (members of the harbor commission, planning, etc.) to discuss local user conflicts before a formal application is made. The application would reflect that local information. If the pre-application procedures were properly done and if the application and supporting information were clearly and openly communicated, siting of aquaculture could be efficiently done. This certainly was not the case recently in Quonochontaug Pond.

Oyster Aquaculture Benefits

As oysters feed, they filter nutrients contained in phytoplankton from the water. Research has shown that about half of the nutrients oysters filter are stored in their tissues and shells--the rest are excreted. When the oysters are harvested, their stored nutrients are removed from the aquatic system. Enhanced oyster aquaculture is currently being looked at as a policy initiative for bioextraction of excess nutrients in Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, and other estuaries. Research is ongoing to quantify the benefits and potential negative effects on estuarine habitat of large-scale oyster aquaculture and to determine the feasibility of oyster aquaculture for nutrient mitigation.

SPC supports shellfish aquaculture in the salt ponds as long as it is appropriately sited and operated. CRMC has a policy that aquaculture leases cannot exceed 5% of the pond's area; SPC was unsuccessful in trying to secure a maximum of 1% of a pond's area. To learn more, I recommend that you take a tour of one of the existing oyster farms in Ninigret, Point Judith, Potter, or Winnapaug Ponds. All of the operators are willing and eager to give you a tour. Our annual guided kayak trips will include a tour of one of the oyster farms.

How to Be a Kind Neighbor to Our Salt Ponds

Rain barrels collect runoff from roof surfaces which would otherwise wash fertilizers or pet/goose waste into the pond. The water can be used in gardens during dry periods or outdoor watering bans, a common occurrence on the south shore during the summer.

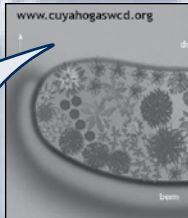


Sweep fertilizer that falls onto impervious surfaces such as driveways or walkways into the grass so it does not wash off into the pond.

Lawn Management Tips:

- * Use organic or low-soluble inorganic fertilizer
- * Mow high (3") and return clippings to the lawn to return nutrients in the grass to the soil
- * Have your soil tested to determine which (if any) nutrient supplements your lawn actually needs
- * Fertilize once or twice per year, but not after late October
- * Older (10+ years) lawns need less fertilizer
- * Reduce excessive or frequent/shallow irrigation. Excessive watering may dissolve N in the water and move it below the root zone; frequent/shallow watering encourages shallow root zones and weak plants.
- * Aerate and thatch lawn to reduce compaction
- * Shift to fescue grasses, which need less N and water

Rain gardens catch roof runoff before it can pick up fertilizers and pet/goose waste and reach the pond. And, they're beautiful!



Adding a vegetated buffer of native plants is not only attractive, but serves two important purposes. It catches yard runoff which may contain fertilizers and animal waste, and it discourages Canada geese from walking out of the pond onto your lawn. Geese don't like places where there is cover for a predator to hide in, so shrubs near the water will encourage geese to look for a safer spot to graze. And please don't feed the geese!



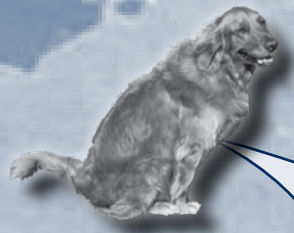
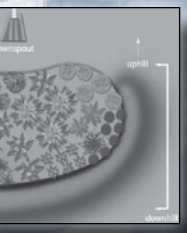
© 2013 M

There are many things that we can do to be kind neighbors to the salt ponds. Reducing our contributions to excess nutrients in pond waters benefits habitat, wildlife, and us! Please visit the "How You Can Be a Pond Steward" page at www.saltpondscoalition.org for more info.

spills
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Fertilizer applied to pond-side gardens and lawns, if not taken up by plants, ends up in groundwater or washes into the pond. In the pond, these fertilizers (mainly nitrogen) cause excess algal growth, which reduces water clarity. This not only unsightly, but decomposition of dead algae consumes oxygen in the water column and at the sediment surface. Very low oxygen conditions are incompatible with marine life and can cause kills of shellfish and finfish. Using fertilizer sparingly or not at all when you live near a pond, and making sure that excess fertilizer does not reach the pond, is extremely important to pond health. Be sure to have your soil tested to make sure you are not adding nutrients to your lawn that are not needed--this has the added benefit of costing less! Also, consider using organic methods to create a healthy, resilient lawn and yard which needs fewer fertilizers and pesticides to thrive.



Pet waste contains high levels of nutrients and bacteria, both of which pollute pond waters. Cleaning up after our pets before their waste can wash into our ponds is an important step pond-neighbors can take to be stewards of the waters. Seal the waste up tightly in a plastic bag and put it in the garbage.

Tale of Two Ponds: Potter and Point Judith

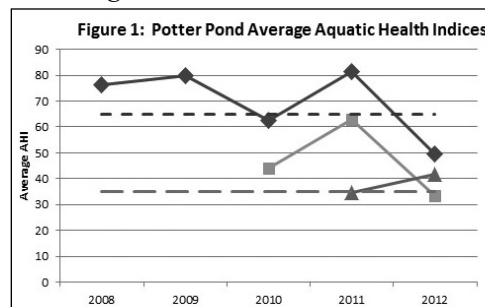
As SPC prepares for our 28th year of water quality monitoring, we have just finished processing our 2012 data. In this installment of our ongoing “Tale of Two Ponds” series, we present monitoring results for our easternmost two ponds: Potter and Point Judith. In the next Tidal Page we will start over with our westernmost two ponds, Winnapaug and Quonochontaug, updated with 2012 data.

Water quality results are presented as Aquatic Health Indices (AHI). The AHI scores sampling parameters on a scale of 0 to 100, like a school report card. A score of less than 35 is considered poor, and a score of greater than 65 is good. An average AHI score is calculated for each testing site, and from the site averages an average AHI is calculated for each pond to give an overall picture of pond health. We produce a report for each pond showing a table of AHI values and a map with symbols for each AHI score (see below). These reports are available on our web site: www.saltpondscoalition.org. There you will also find detailed data reports for each sampling site and parameter we measure.

Potter Pond is in South Kingstown, and Point Judith Pond to its east is split down the middle between South Kingstown and Narragansett. Unlike the other coastal lagoons, these ponds are oriented more north-south rather than east-west. The ponds are connected by a half mile channel—this is the only source of clean

seawater into Potter Pond. During ebb or flood tides, the water races powerfully through this channel under the Succotash Road bridge in East Matunuck. Point Judith is our second largest pond, and is actually the estuary where the Saugatucket River meets the sea in the Harbor of Refuge, just past the bustling Port of Galilee.

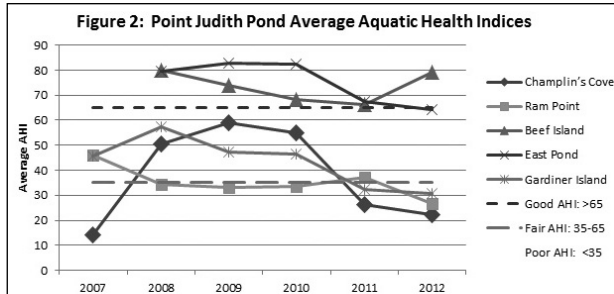
Figure 1 is a plot of average AHI values for Potter Pond. The mid-pond site, across the pond from the channel, had the highest score of 49.4 (Fair-, almost Fair+). The 2012 chlorophyll values at all three Potter sites were very high, with AHI scores of 0. This was the greatest contributor to the mid-pond site's Fair score, and a huge departure from the chlorophyll AHI of 100 the previous year (2008-2010 were all in the Good category, too). We will watch the 2013 chlorophyll data very closely! Overall, the trend at the mid-pond site appears to be declining, but the r^2 value of the trend line is only 0.36 indicating a weak fit to the data.



The AHI at the west site was 41.7 (Fair-); at the north site the AHI was 33.3 (Poor). Water coming into Potter Pond through the channel must travel about 9/10 mile through a constricted area to reach the deep northern basin of the pond; similarly, water coming from the channel must travel about 3/4 mile and through a constricted spot to reach the western basin. Therefore, flushing of these basins does not happen readily and the water quality likely suffers as a result. We do not yet have enough data at these sites to look for trends in water quality.

Figure 2 plots the average AHI val-

ues for Point Judith Pond. In Point Judith, clean seawater has about 4 1/4 miles to travel from the Harbor of Refuge, and through a very constricted spot, to reach the mouth of the Saugatucket. Therefore, the sites at the southern end of the pond had better AHI scores than the sites in



the northern end of the pond. Beef Island had the highest score of 79.2 (Good) and has remained about the same since 2008, the first year with data. The East Pond site had the next highest score of 64.1 (Fair+, almost Good). However, the AHI at this site has declined since 2008, when the AHI was 80.0 (Good). The r^2 value of the regression line is 0.69, indicating a fairly good fit of the line to the data points. The remaining three sites all had AHIs in the Poor category: Champlin's Cove (22.3), Ram Point (26.7), and Gardiner Island (30.6). All three sites had 2012 chlorophyll AHIs of 0, indicating very high levels of algae. Ram Point and Gardiner Island both had poor 2012 dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN) AHIs; Ram Point

and Champlin's Cove had very poor total organic nitrogen (TON) AHIs. These indicate high levels of nutrients in the water. Ram Point is in the vicinity of several marinas and is also close to the mouth of the Saugatucket River, which had DIN AHIs of 0 all three years it was tested. However, the Saugatucket data for TON were very good for those years. The AHI scores for Ram Point and Gardiner Island appear to be declining somewhat, with moderate r^2 values of 0.55 and 0.64, respectively. The AHI scores at Champlin's Cove were too variable to determine a trend.



Barrier Beach and Dune Restoration 101: One Storm Away...

By Art Ganz

As we have heard and read, beach erosion is happening all along our coast. The increased frequency of severe storms has raised havoc with our shoreline. Undeveloped areas with vegetated dunes fared better than more developed areas without vegetative buffers. Man-made hardened structures are no match for nature's fury. Dr. Jon Boothroyd has described this process, which is proceeding at an increased rate (Tidal Pages, Fall 2012 and Winter 2013).

In Quonochontaug we are fortunate to have a half mile stretch of pristine beach. Severe storms in 1977 and 1978 devastated the beach. Since that time I have worked, with CRMC approval, to restore that beach using dune fencing to trap wind-blown sand and vegetation to hold the sand and pro-

mote dune development. The project has worked well thanks to the many neighbors who volunteer. Each year the residents and their guests enjoy a beautiful beach thanks to their efforts.

Over the past five years the beach has been battered due to the regularity of storms, and the beach complex has migrated landward as Dr. Boothroyd predicted. Over the past two years the dune line has been pushed back 50 feet. So far the beach has not breached into Garden Pond, but that is inevitable. Fortunately, the well vegetated dunes did not breach and sustained only mild wash-over during Sandy. I credit that to the hearty root systems of the vegetation. The fore dunes were American beach grass and the back dunes contained a mixture of shrubs (beach rose, bayberry and poison ivy) and some

black pines, junipers and cedars.

After Sandy, we replaced the lost dune fencing and wind-blown sand has



accumulated up to three feet in areas since. One weekend in March, thanks to a local arborist and 25 volunteers, we were able to purchase and plant 7500 clumps of beach grass along the fore dune. Hopefully, as time and funding are available, we will replant the damaged back dune areas. We hope to restore this area as best we can, even knowing full well that it could be one storm away from destruction.

Resident Canada Geese Control Program

Tom Gentz (Pres., Charlestown Town Council) & Elise Torello

We are all familiar with our ever-present Canada geese, but did you know that there are two types that can be in RI? *Migratory* geese are only here while they are heading north to breed or flying south for the winter. *Resident* geese were inadvertently (as part of population restoration efforts) bred to stay here year-round decades ago.

Geese are prolific breeders, and they have become so numerous that they are causing problems for humans and the environment. Large quantities of droppings are a nuisance and pollute



the ponds and tributaries with nutrients and bacteria. But what can we do about it?

There is a humane way of con-

trolling the resident goose population: egg oiling. This method is approved by the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), and Geesepeace.

In short, goose eggs are temporarily removed from the nest and tested for their developmental stage by placing them in a bucket of fresh water. If the eggs are "young" enough, they will sink. These eggs are rubbed with ordinary corn oil and replaced in the nest—they will not develop further. Eggs that float are too developed to be oiled humanely and are replaced in the nest to lay a new clutch of eggs.

For this process to be effective over time, volunteers are needed in two phases each year:

1. February/March: Observers are needed during goose pairing and mating to locate nesting sites by kayak or other type of boat. Nests are often on

islands as they are safer from predators. 2. Late March/early April, after the eggs are laid: Teams of three people each are needed to go out in boats and perform the oiling. To legally handle the eggs, oilers must be trained and registered with the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

A goose egg oiling program was tested in Charlestown last year; 90 eggs oiled in Green Hill and Ninigret Ponds. The Town's goal for 2013 is to oil 150 eggs on Quonochontaug, Ninigret, and Green Hill Ponds, and volunteers have been recruited, registered, and trained for both phases. The town secured landowner permission to access nests and obtained the necessary permits from RI DEM. Hopefully, over the next few years of continuing effort, we will begin to see a decrease in the resident Canada goose population. For more information on humane Canada goose control, visit these web sites: www.Geesepeace.com, and www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/cangeese.pdf.

We All Need to Be Storytellers

By Elise Torello

On March 9th, I attended the Land and Water Conservation Summit at URI. The presentation of the keynote speaker, Steve Archibald, was listed on the program: “Not a Storyteller? Perhaps It’s Time to Reconsider!” I’ll admit to thinking, “Oh storytelling, big deal.” I could not have been more wrong—storytelling is a VERY big deal, and it is critical that we are the ones to tell our own story—honestly, thoroughly, and in a way that demonstrates our passion for our mission. Further, if we don’t tell our own story well or often enough, someone else will tell it for us—and not necessarily in a way that we would choose or appreciate.

Steve’s emphasis was on the importance of storytelling to improve public awareness of our conservation organizations and support of our missions. This goes beyond telling folks what we are doing—it encompasses expressing where we came from, why we are doing what we do, how we make our policy decisions, and what we plan to do into the future. If we are asking people to support our mission, we owe it to them to tell them our full story so that they can make an informed choice whether or not to join us.

Many of SPC’s Board and members have been supporters for years or even decades and are familiar with SPC’s story. However, many of our members are relative newcomers to southern RI or SPC. Whether you are an “old-timer,” recent “transplant,” or someone in between, here in a nutshell is the story of SPC.

Where SPC Came From

In 1984, the Pondwatcher Program began with a grant from URI Sea Grant. In 1985, the Salt Ponds Coalition was formed from several neighborhood salt pond advocacy groups covering the region from Watch Hill to Point Judith, and was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) educational and advocacy non-profit organization. The Pondwatcher program became part of SPC and has expanded significantly since. In 2013 we will conduct our 28th year of

water quality monitoring--we are the oldest continuously operating volunteer marine monitoring program in the nation.

In 2001, the RI General Assembly passed legislation to create the RI Rivers Council (RC)--a citizen based advocacy and water quality program for the protection of rivers and estuarine systems. The RC designated local watershed councils as the recognized advocates for their watershed areas. Towns and state regulatory agencies are required to notify these local councils of upcoming developments and policies affecting their watershed.

In 2003, SPC was designated as the watershed council for the salt ponds region. Thus, SPC became the recognized salt ponds advocate in local and state regulatory and policy forums, such as town boards and commissions, RI DEM, and RI CRMC. SPC Vice President Ted Callender has been on the RC for many years; I will take his place at the table.

Why Are We Still Here?

Our salt ponds are a regional treasure, which support productive habitat and diverse wildlife as well as public recreation and enhanced property values. They contribute substantial revenues to two of RI’s largest industries: tourism and fisheries.

Unfortunately, the ponds have suffered from nutrient enrichment and loss of species and habitat diversity. Several decades ago they supported healthy populations of scallops, oysters, flounder, eels and blue crab. Today, these species are rarer. Eelgrass beds, which are important habitat for fish and shellfish, are shrinking.

SPC’s mission is: *To protect and enhance the health of the salt ponds for the benefit of wildlife and people.* We recognize that humans are part of the salt pond ecosystem. Along with the benefits we enjoy from the ponds, we have a responsibility to be pond stewards--that is, to ensure that the ponds continue to provide these benefits for generations to come, not just for us but for the salt pond habitat and wildlife.

Therefore, our mission includes educating people in the salt ponds region

about how they can contribute to the well-being of the resource. SPC keeps residents informed of issues with the ponds, and we lead and contribute to programs which enhance the ponds’ ecological health. We are an active presence in the RI environmental community and work with other organizations to further our mission. The scientific expertise possessed by our board is well-known and respected; we are often called upon (especially SPC President Art Ganz, with his encyclopedic knowledge of RI marine waters) to provide knowledge and support to conservation or resource management projects being carried out by other organizations or the State of RI.

With so many diverse uses of the ponds (fishing, boating, shellfishing, aquaculture, wildlife viewing, etc.), occasional user conflicts are inevitable. As a conservation organization, SPC’s actions and policy decisions must be based upon the best available scientific knowledge in order to support the best possible outcome for the public salt pond resource. SPC relies upon our extensive water quality data, searches of the scientific literature, and consultations with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the state (DEM and CRMC), universities (URI, Roger Williams University, et al), and other conservation groups (Save the Bay, Nature Conservancy, et al) when making its policy decisions.

Where We Are Going

SPC will continue working hard on behalf of the ponds by continuing our monitoring, outreach programs, conservation projects, and advocacy at the state and local levels. We will keep guiding kayak tours and Salt Pond Safaris to help people of all ages enjoy and learn more about the ponds. We will keep you up to date on pond-related news through our newsletter, website, FaceBook, and *occasional* emails (we want to inform you, not annoy you!).

So, that is the story of SPC. We cannot thank you enough for your enthusiasm and support. We always want to hear from you, and we look forward to seeing you out and about on the ponds!

Help Needed at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center Front Desk

SPC is very fortunate to have a partner in the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW). Our office is located in the beautiful USFW Kettle Pond Visitor Center (KPVC) just off Rt. 1 in Charlestown. Having our office in this facility has many advantages. First and foremost, the USFW staff are amazing. They are talent-



ed, knowledgeable, helpful, and a pleasure to work with--we are very appreciative of them all. Plus, the facility itself is a perfect location for SPC--centrally located in the salt pond region right across Rt. 1 from Ninigret Pond. We are able to use the conference rooms and library for meetings and other gatherings. It is truly ideal.

In order to keep our office in the KPVC, we pay a low monthly rent; the rent is low is because we also provide volunteers to greet visitors and answer questions at the front desk. We are currently looking for more volunteers to help out. Can you spare a few hours a couple of days per month? USFW will provide



Can you see yourself behind this desk?

training. It is fun and rewarding to see families and school groups come in to enjoy the exhibits and learn about nature. If you are interested in helping, please email us at saltpondscoalition@gmail.com, or call us at 401-322-3068. Thank you!!!

Make a Fashion (and Conservation) Statement with a SPC Hat!

The hottest fashion trend on the runways this spring is the SPC hat! Well, maybe not, but wearing one does make a statement, even if it isn't a fashion statement. It says that you are a strong supporter of our salt ponds!



All members who join or renew with a donation of \$250 or more can request a SPC hat--just check the box on your do-

nation form. We now have tan hats with regular and extra long bills, plus a limited supply of haute couture colors: green (regular SPC hat), green (25th anniversary hat), pink, coral, and white (great for the tennis court!). If you would like a color other than tan, or want a long-billed hat, please tell us which you would like on your form. If you renew online and would like a hat, please send us an email to let us know: saltpondscoalition@gmail.com.

We'd love to see your photos of you wearing your SPC hat in interesting lo-

cations, so please send them in! And we thank you again for your very generous support!



You never know where you'll see our hats--even on the African savannah! Photo: P. Keating

Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund

The Abby Aukerman Scholarship was created by the Aukerman family in loving memory of Abby, who was born and raised in South Kingstown and graduated from the University of RI (URI) in 1998. Abby loved life on the shore of Point Judith Pond and spent summers on and



in its waters. At one point she even delivered newspapers to boats moored in the northern harbors! She worked hard, but loved having fun and always remembered her friends. She touched many lives and was admired for treating people with kindness and respect.

Abby's love for the water and the environment was the inspiration for this scholarship, which is awarded annually to a URI undergraduate student from south county studying marine-related science. The URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences supports the RI marine community by

providing world-class education and research with a direct bearing on issues critical to protecting our environment. Students learn in a research-based atmosphere and are able to hone skills that prepare them for key roles in the life sciences and in the stewardship of our environment, including our vital coastal resources.

SPC has been a proud sponsor of the Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund since its creation 2001. Please consider making a gift to this fund when renewing your membership in SPC, and we thank you!



Salt Ponds Coalition

PO Box 875
Charlestown, RI 02813

**It's time to
renew for
2013!**

**Also, please
consider a
donation to SPC
in honor of of
someone special.**

**Salt Ponds Coalition
is a 501(c)(3)
non-profit.
Gifts to SPC are tax-
deductible.**

Please Help Us Help the Ponds

**Please use this form to renew for 2013 or make an additional donation,
and please ask your friends and neighbors to become members, too.**

- ▶ An SPC membership for the 2013 season helps fund protection of the ponds.
- ▶ With your membership, you will receive future issues of the Tidal Page.
- ▶ Donations are tax deductible and may help reduce the tax you owe.

Please make checks payable to Salt Ponds Coalition. Salt Ponds Coalition also accepts donations of stocks. Memberships run from January through December.

- \$40 - \$74 Contributing
- \$75 - \$149 Supporting
- \$150 - \$249 Sustaining
- \$250 - \$499 Advocate
- \$500 - \$999 Steward
- \$1000 - \$2499 Benefactor
- \$2500+ Patron

Name: _____

Permanent Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Summer Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Check here if you would like an SPC hat with your membership of \$250+

I would like to sponsor a testing station for \$600



Salt Ponds Coalition

P.O. Box 875
Charlestown, RI
02813
401-322-3068

*We
appreciate
your
continued
generous
support!*

Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund

\$ _____ Donation to the
Aukerman Scholarship Fund

Please help us fund this worthwhile scholarship, which helps support a deserving undergraduate student in marine studies at URI. If you would like to make a contribution to the scholarship fund, please use the form above and fill in the amount of your gift at left.