

Natural Resources Advisory Board draft Minutes April 29 2022; 10:00 am

Attending: Herb Gstalder, Laura Hewitt, Tom Slack, John Duane, John Riehl

> Meeting called to order 10:05 am; no public comments

> Ponds plan reviewed by Gstalder & Hewitt

- Ready for sampling to start, with APCC support
- Concern about cesspools and phosphate remains; further work underway
- Letter to Conservation Agent/Committee, support for ponds study & request for more data
  - \* Approved as submitted 5-0 (see attached)
- Future project implementation will probably require outside funding

> Harbor survey Plan

- RFP approved as written; needs further revisions by Town Purchasing Agent
- JDuane agrees to meet with ConsCom on May 18 to seek their input & approval
- Need to educate attendees at ATM; complicated project

> Climate Change Committee.

- Riehl had communication about sea level rise and concern for low-lying Marshes (Duck Creek ) and landings (Powers)

> Rights of Public Access Committee

- Project approved with support of MassAudubon to fill “puddle” along marsh edge south of dike

> Use of Town Conservation Properties

- Discussion of broader use of Town Conservation Properties – Cons Com and Wellfleet Conservation Trust. Suggestion of broader environments: open spaces not just Woodlands/forests. Action is to discuss with Open Space Committee.

> Wellfleet Harbor Conference organization

- Initially run by NRAB; currently run by Mass Audubon Wellfleet, subject to a broad base local committee. Donated funds are held by NRAB and administered by the Town, which is awkward. Proposed to shift financial operations to MAS. Concern raised by John Duane that this might weaken Town ownership of the Conference. Motion agreed 4-1.

> Minutes of March 3 2022 approved without change; 5-0

> Adjourn 11:20 am



## **Project Overview**

Climate change will be the major driving force affecting Wellfleet Harbor, both for sea level rise and warmer waters. In order to plan ahead we need a solid understanding of life in the harbor today.

Wellfleet is built around its harbor, covering a span of 5 miles north-south and 2 miles east-west. The harbor is a critical to the Town's economy, for shellfishing, fishing, boating and with a shoreline offering a multitude of opportunities.

The last survey of the biological health of the harbor was undertaken in 1972, by the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), under the leadership of J.R. Curley :

[https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5166f/uploads/study\\_of\\_the\\_marine\\_resources\\_of\\_wellfleet\\_harbor\\_curley\\_report.pdf](https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf5166f/uploads/study_of_the_marine_resources_of_wellfleet_harbor_curley_report.pdf)

More recently, a full benthic study of the harbor has been completed (see Appendix). This is a useful background for planning.

There has also been considerable work on some specific issues – harbor water quality, Diamond-back Terrapin, the count of Sea Herring during Spring migration from the ocean to Gull Ponds. But basic data on shellfish and fin fish populations is missing.

Many changes have happened since 1972: increased population, growth of shellfish aquaculture, and global warming as examples. Two critical projects – the Herring River restoration and waste-water control (for nitrogen reduction) are nearing implementation. Harbor dredging was completed in the winter of 2021-2022.

It is timely to undertake a new harbor survey.

## **Proposed Goals**

We seek proposals that would use modern technology and science to provide an overview of harbor life and interactions.

The basics of water chemistry and predator food sources should provide a foundation for the project. Building on this would be a survey of key harbor wildlife, especially finfish and wild shellfish.

The goal is a report that would summarize the current state of the harbor with suggestions of future work or regulation needs.

Hillary Lemos  
Conservation Committee  
Wellfleet, MA

April 29, 2022

Hillary– we appreciated the comments and interest from you and other Cons Comm members during your March 16 meeting. The NRAB continues to think through the many issues associated with holistic pond health and creating a “Ponds Management Plan” and, as discussed, will come back to the Cons Comm as we get a bit further in the process. During the March meeting, Cons Comm indicated that you have or are working on a census of septic systems (including type/age) and cesspools in properties around the Wellfleet ponds, and particularly those abutting ponds and within the CCNS.

We would greatly appreciate receiving a copy of the septic and cesspool inventory/census if this is already complete. Please send this to Herb Gstadler and Laura Hewitt, as we are the operating Pond sub-committee within the NRAB. If the census is not yet available, do you have an estimated date of completion?

There was also some discussion whether any government authority, committee, or board has authority to require a homeowner to upgrade a “working” cesspool or septic system other than at time of major renovation (requiring permitting) or change in ownership. If you have any specifics on this, we’d appreciate receiving your comments. We are continuing to research IA septic systems as well...

Thanks for all you do for Wellfleet! We look forward to receiving the septic/cesspool inventory and any summary of authority as respects septic/cesspool upgrades.

Regards,

Herb Gstadler – [herb@gstadler.com](mailto:herb@gstadler.com)

Laura Hewitt – [hewittriley@verizon.net](mailto:hewittriley@verizon.net)