

# OYSTER POND SENTINEL

DECEMBER 1994

Warmest of holiday greetings to all lovers and supporters of Oyster Pond. This issue of the Sentinel brings excellent news with which to close out 1994, and send us all into 1995 confident that the health and beauty of Oyster Pond are being protected and can be improved.

## FORMATION OF OYSTER POND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Prompted by a letter from Ermine Lovell expressing the concern of Salt Pond Sanctuaries about the outstanding debt of the Oyster Pond Trust, a number of us met several times this summer to reinvigorate and reorganize our efforts on behalf of the Pond. Following an informational meeting to which all of you were invited in early September, a volunteer group met on October 16 to formalize ourselves as a Board of a new organization. Present were: John Dowling, Lon Hocker, Jr., Friederich and Holger Jannasch, William Kerfoot, Bergit and Werner Loewenstein, Barry Norris, Dana Rodin, Cecily Selby Coles and Donald Zinn.

The following Officers and a committee structure were agreed upon:

### Officers and Committee Structure

Chairman - John Dowling  
Vice Chairman - Cecily Selby Coles  
Secretary - Wendy Gabriel  
Treasurer - Lon Hocker

### Committees

Fund Raising - Bill Kerfoot  
Land Acquisition - Werner Loewenstein  
Pond Management - Barry Norris  
Legal Matters - Dana Rodin

### Membership - Annual

This group committed itself to the new name of Oyster Pond Environmental Trust and set in motion steps to incorporate by early 1995. Although no formal statement of Mission has yet been drafted, at least two needs were identified:

- o Proactive long-range planning for preservation and improvement of Oyster Pond is essential to develop a successful strategy for maintenance and for undeveloped property.
- o The need for efficient channels for communication and consensus will increase through time as more information on options for pond management become available and as various watershed preservation issues continue to emerge. The next year is particularly important as the town seeks input for a community backed plan.

### FUND RAISING:

Fund raising efforts this summer, although low key, were so successful that it has been possible to pay off the second mortgage (\$67,000 principal) on the Fisher Property. Presently owed is approximately \$100,000 to Plymouth Savings for the first mortgage. This requires quarterly payments of \$3,000. There is also a personal note outstanding of approximately \$50,000.

All of us would prefer our contributions to pay off principal, rather than interest. With a

unified and concerted effort we are confident that we can raise monies to substantially reduce, if not eliminate, these debts. An intensive fund-raising campaign will be initiated in the Spring to accomplish this. The Land Acquisition Committee is presently surveying other parcels of land that might in the future be purchased or given. Knowing that many of you may find it convenient to make contributions to this cause during calendar year 1994, an envelope is enclosed for year-end contributions. If you are able to make a substantial contribution at this time, you can be assured that ALL CONTRIBUTIONS MADE NOW WILL BE APPLIED TO REDUCING THE SUBSTANTIAL DEBT PRINCIPAL. Funds are in hand for the December mortgage payment, and pledges in hand will cover the first payment of 1995. Top priority is now to reduce the debt principal.

### STATE OF THE POND:

At the September gathering at the Dowlings home, Brian Howes reported on the study that has been underway for 7 years. Thanks to the active volunteer Pond Watchers and others, data to make informed management decisions with respect to the pond have been accumulating steadily. This study of the chemical and biological health of the Pond is funded by Sea Grant of WHOI and the Town of Falmouth. The active volunteer group of Pond Watchers participated in gathering critical data.

Results of a special experiment undertaken this summer indicated that wind cannot mix oxygen all the way down to the bottom of the pond. A thick layer of water on the bottom is too heavy to be moved upward to the surface because the layer is salty in the deep basins. Consistent with this experiment, the Pond Watchers have observed both decreases in low-oxygen areas in 1992 and decreases in salinity in 1992, compared to 1988 -1991.

While more predictive models linking salinity levels and oxygen levels are being developed, the Oyster Pond community needs to define what would constitute a healthy pond. The development of that definition is complicated by the historic evolution of the pond from a completely-fresh kettlehole in post-glacial times, to a marine-influenced environment in the 1700's capable of supporting oysters, to a less-salty regime supporting spawning herring and alewives in the 1800's as causeway barriers were erected, to the most recent increase in salinity arising from circulation through a larger culvert to the Trunk River in recent past years. Each salinity regime has associated with it a different mix of pond species, a different capacity for oxygen circulation, and a different price tag in terms of engineering, permitting, construction, and certainty of success. One potential recommendation would define conditions of the 1960's as a management goal, including slightly reduced salinity from present levels, improved capacity for oxygen mixing with the reduction of the salty bottom layer, a low-salinity species composition, seasonally including spawning herring and alewives, and a relatively small-expense engineering effort to install a herring run (allowing salt water influx with monthly high tides).

If conversion back to less saline environment is chosen as a preferred

alternative, then nutrient reduction must be necessary to control excess freshwater eutrophication, shifting from a nitrogen-limitation to a phosphorus limitation.

One significant preventive step to effect the future health of Oyster Pond will be the preservation of undeveloped land within the watershed. Of long-range concern is the fate of remaining undeveloped land. Benefits of undeveloped parcels similar to the Fisher property accrue not only in terms of pond water quality, but also in terms of wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities such as walking trails. Presently many residents use some trails through private properties to get to public paths.

### THE TASK BEFORE US

The Town of Falmouth, after capital improvements to Little Pond, has now turned its attention to Oyster Pond. By spring of next year, the Town DPW and Planning Board expect to receive reports on actions to be undertaken to improve Oyster Pond. Brian Howes of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute is preparing a report based on the study he reported to us at the September meeting.

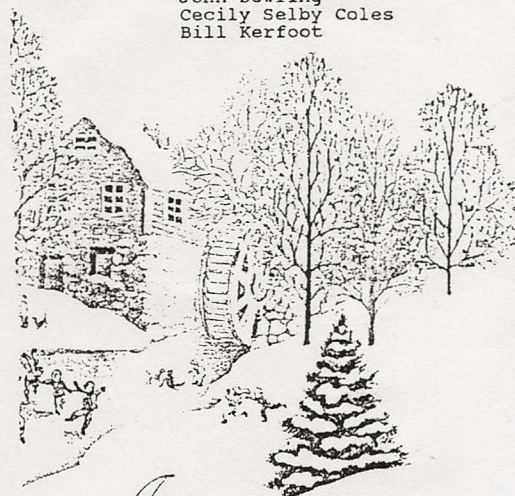
The abutters of Oyster Pond have expressed concern over several areas:

- (1) Water quality of the Pond
- (2) Deteriorating condition of the outlet/inlet
- (3) Land use surrounding the Pond
- (4) Destruction of flowers and trees

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EFFORT

If you wish to assist in our debt reduction effort, please mail your year-end contribution in the enclosed envelope. Be sure to mark your check "Oyster Pond Trust" in the lower margin.

John Dowling  
Cecily Selby Coles  
Bill Kerfoot



*At the Holiday Season our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our progress possible.*