



A Message from Melinda Hall, OPET President



A year ago, few of us would have predicted the “new normal” that we find ourselves in today (and most would agree there is nothing “normal” about it!). The last time the OPET board members met in person was back in March: like everyone else, we have migrated to Zoom. It quickly became

apparent that holding our Annual Meeting as usual was unrealistic at best and irresponsible at worst. Nor did a virtual meeting seem like a palatable substitute, given everyone’s “Zoom fatigue.” Therefore, we reluctantly decided to cancel the meeting and include our annual financial report in this Summer Newsletter. We are financially sound, thanks to your many membership renewals and additional donations!!

Normally, we would be required to hold a vote by OPET members on new additions to our Board of Directors, but this year only one person is required to rotate

off the Board. We have not recruited any new potential members due to the awkwardness of joining the Board during the pandemic. Speaking of recruitment, we are always seeking fresh voices and minds for our Board of Directors once we can meet in person again. We encourage you all to think about whether you would like to serve! You need not be a scientist or land professional, just someone with enthusiasm and interest in helping to maintain the pond and our property, as well as keeping the public informed on matters related to both. Sometimes what we need are strong backs to clear trails or haul rocks out of Trunk River. You also don’t need to live in Falmouth year-round, as long-distance members can always join Board meetings via Skype or some other platform. Please be in touch (info@OPET.org) if you would like to learn more.

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Notice of Cancellation of the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting provided for in Section 2.5 of the By-Laws of the Corporation is hereby cancelled under the Covid-19 Emergency special provision of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, Section 16 (i).



Dorene Sykes

Preserving the Beauty of Falmouth

by Bill Kerfoot, OPET Board Member

What is the value of preserving native lands, trails, our ponds in these trying times? We are now in the fourth month of the worst pandemic of four generations, dating back to our great-grandfathers. During this period, we can take time off from our stay-at-home seclusion to wander out on the walking paths of Zinn and the Headwaters conservation lands to renew our spirits and enjoy the diversity of plants and animals which once again spring forth. During this period of time when the Covid-19 virus has killed more people than the sum of all the wars of this generation, we can enjoy the peacefulness of nature which surrounds us to reduce our anxieties.

At a time when all wildlife – animal, plant, and even insect diversity – continues to shrink, Oyster Pond

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Join OPET Today!

Your Donations make it possible to continue our work to conserve and protect the natural environment and ecological systems of Oyster Pond.

Officers & Directors 2019–2020

President - Melinda Hall

Treasurer - Keith Schwegel

Clerk - Meredith Golden

Executive Director - Wendi Buesseler

Visit our web site at www.opet.org

Directors:

Steve Leighton	Alfredo Aretxabaleta	Martin Monk
John Dowling	Dana Rodin	Richard Hale
Jonathan Smith	Bill Kerfoot	Mike Spall

Or send us an email at -info@opet.org

OPET Board meetings are open to all OPET members.

Meetings are typically held at 4:30 pm on the second or third Sunday of the month at the Treetops Clubhouse. Currently, the meetings are held online at a time convenient to the Directors.

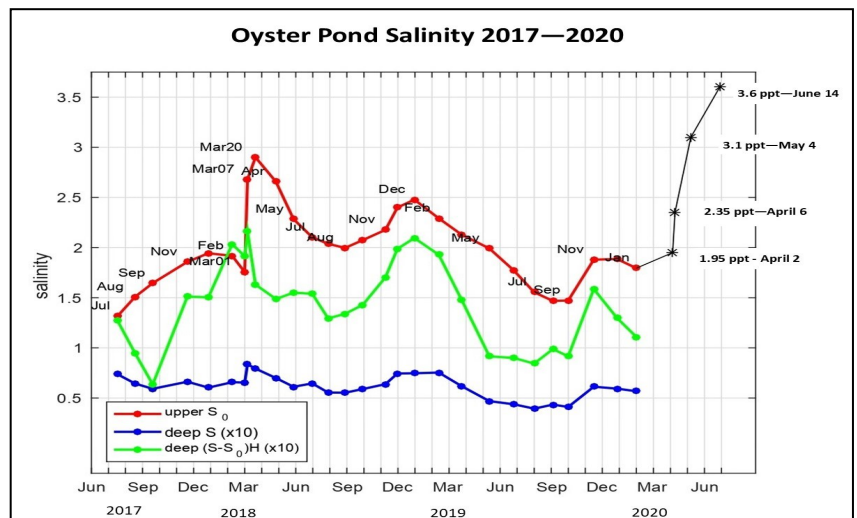
We are a 501 c3 organization.
Contributions are tax deductible.
Tax Id number—04-3278142



Town Dredging Improves Pond Salinity

by Mike Spall, OPET Board Member

Because the salinity of Oyster Pond is crucial to the health of the ecosystem, we have been monitoring it closely since the toxic Cyanobacteria bloom in the summer of 2016. Salinity in the range of 2-4 ppt is optimal to support the brackish ecosystem suitable for white perch and spawning herring. The salinity dropped to below 2 ppt in the fall of 2019, so the town of Falmouth brought in special dredging equipment and did a very thorough job of cleaning out gravel and sand in Trunk River that had blocked the flow of salty water into the pond.



As you can see from the figure, the salinity has steadily grown to over 3.5 ppt, near the top of the desired range (red line). The transition from colored lines to the single black line corresponds to when the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution closed its buildings due to COVID-19. WHOI has generously been providing the measurement instrument and processing the data for OPET usage. The data since then has been collected with a simpler hand-held device, which is not suitable for measuring the volume of high salinity in the deep parts of the pond (the green and blue lines). Now that there is sufficient exchange between Oyster Pond and Vineyard Sound, we are able to use the weir again to keep the salinity within the desired range.

Gifts to OPET in honor of:

- ♥ **Douglas Burrill** from Nancy Barnett
- ♥ **Mindy Hall** from Leslie Hall, Susanne Hallstein and Leonard & Patricia Johnson
- ♥ **Wendi Buesseler** from Emily and Josef Kelndorfer and Cecily C. Selby
- ♥ **Dana Rodin** from Frederick & Judith Makrauer
- ♥ **Liza Fox and Alfredo Aretxabaleta** from Susan O'Connor & Shirley Jenkins
- ♥ **Lee and Lou Turner** from Judith Ziss
- ♥ **Helene and Gilbert Crofts** from Dr. Jeffery Wisch and Mrs. Cynthia Crofts-Wisch
- ♥ **Jonathan Smith** from Michael Fanger & Linda Sattel

President's message—continued from page 1

We have also just learned that our long-time treasurer Keith Schwegel must step down owing to other responsibilities and opportunities in his life. We thank him for 5 years of dedicated service to OPET. At this time, we have not found a replacement.

It has been widely observed that social distancing orders have increased visits to natural areas. Our conservation lands are no exception: our Exec. Director has seen a huge increase in the number of map brochures picked up at our kiosk weekly! Last fall, a severe nor'easter in October cracked or brought down dozens of enormous branches and as many as a dozen trees on the property, creating significant danger along the trails until we could get professionals in there to clean up the mess. Later in the winter, the first time I finally got back in there for a walk since the previous winter, I was astounded at how different the trails looked! We also continue to learn about all the wildlife inhabiting the woods, as our wildlife cams have captured everything from flying squirrels to coyotes to fisher cats; recently, a nearby resident captured 4 juvenile fishers on camera! Isn't it wonderful how life continues to flourish all around us, in spite of us, even?

Last fall, OPET urged the Town Water Quality Management Committee to hold a neighborhood meeting to discuss the revised draft Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) for Oyster Pond. It had

been more than a year since the previous such meeting, and we knew that local residents (ourselves among them) had many questions about the plan. Over 50 people attended the meeting. Many questions were raised, particularly regarding the costs to homeowners of the two options that might be implemented: Advance Innovative/Alternative septic systems; and the backup plan of "traditional" sewerage. The working group clarified that Advanced I/A systems would be the "preferred" option submitted to the state because if traditional sewerage were selected, the state would not even consider using advanced I/A systems to clean up a watershed. The Town hopes to perhaps use advanced I/A as a treatment option in other impaired estuaries. The WQMC working group had expected to make its recommendation on the Oyster Pond CWMP to the state by the end of 2019. However, the WQMC ultimately decided to postpone it, pending approval of the CWMP for Falmouth's other south facing embayments. This means that no changes will be required of Oyster Pond watershed homeowners before at least 2024. As always, OPET plans to stay on top of the decision process and keep our members and neighbors informed.

We will miss seeing you all at the Annual Meeting, and look forward to renewing that tradition next summer, when, hopefully, life will feel a little more relaxed than it does just now. As always, we encourage you to reach out to us via email or Facebook with your comments and questions, and of course to enjoy the pond and the trails on the Headwaters land!

OPET Treasurer's Annual Report

July 1, 2019—June 30, 2020

Income		Fundraising -	\$662
Dues -	\$13,100	Insurance -	\$2,947
Donations -	\$20,934	Tax Prep Services -	\$960
Grants -	\$ 1,200	Total Expenses =	
Other Income -	\$106		\$40,333
Total income =		Assets - June 30, 2020	
	\$35,340	Cash -	\$57,436
Expenses:		CDs -	\$10,652
General Operations -		Book Inventory -	\$3,495
	\$1,586	Total Available =	
Payroll -	\$25,311		\$71,583
Land Stewardship -		Land -	\$2,234,000
	\$6,922	Total Assets =	
Outreach -	\$1,945		\$2,305,583



Andy Wexler

Here is the photo of the fisher cat babies! They must be happy living in the OPET lands to reproduce. They are not related to cats, but to martens and weasels. Nor do they fish. They eat rabbits, squirrels, mice, reptiles, amphibians, dead fish and occasionally house cats (so keep cats indoors!). Fishers once roamed the forests of Cape Cod and all but vanished once the canal was built. They resurfaced in 2005 and sightings have increased significantly since then.

Preserving the Beauty—continued from page 1

Environmental Trust works to save the wild beauty of Cape Cod for future Falmouth generations to enjoy.

As you stroll past the pine trees, oaks, and beeches,



Dorene Sykes

remember that these plants provide the oxygen that you depend upon for life. A full grown tree can emit enough oxygen per day to support two adult humans. An acre

of trees can annually consume the amount of carbon dioxide equivalent to that produced by driving an average car nearly 34,000 miles.

Mark Robinson of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts recently “celebrated the simple fact that by this awakening, many more Cape Codders are finally acknowledging the immense value provided for physical and mental health by our vast portfolio of protected open spaces. These set-aside natural lands add up to more than one-third of the land mass of Cape Cod. They did not magically appear. They are the result of the collective effort of all of us, hard-won victories meant to stave off the complete suburbanization of our Cape.”

So, enjoy the 1.5-mile trail system on the combined OPET conservation lands where you may encounter some of the animals we have captured in photos with our “critter cams” over the past year. You might see signs of the deer, coyotes, fisher cats or otters that live on these lands. Listen for the songs of frogs from the wetlands and the vernal pools in the spring. Keep an

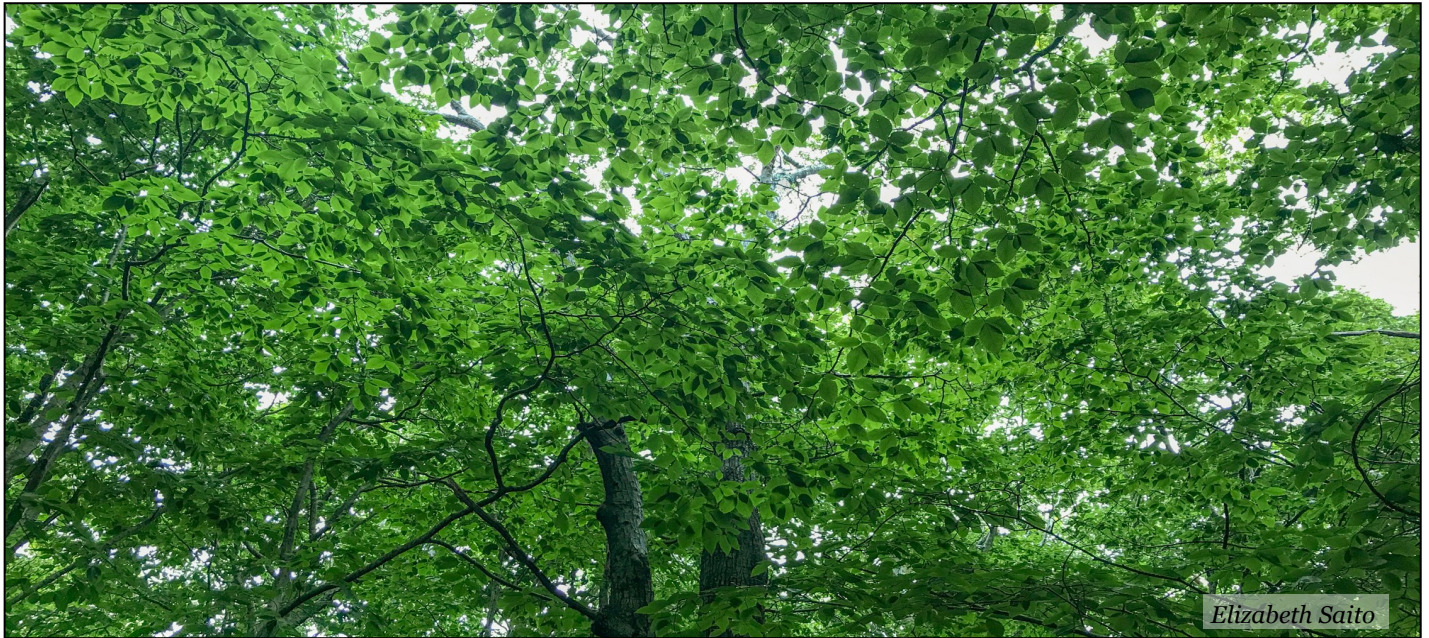


eye out for herons that fish along the edges of Oyster Pond. Listen for oven birds calling from the forest undergrowth. Enjoy the diversity of plants from spring blooming lady slippers to late summer white wood asters.

A kiosk at the end of Fells Road holds maps of the pathways or you can download a copy from our web site. Enjoy the beauty and nature of our lands.

Gifts to OPET in Memory of :

- ♥ **Dr. Artemas J. Stewart** from Jean Stewart
- ♥ **Werner Loewenstein** from Laurie Baefsky & Joel Martin
- ♥ **Leonard F. Beford** from Melissa Beford
- ♥ **Bob Livingstone** from Art and Booje Calfee
- ♥ **Robert Luddington** from Meredith Golden & Bob Chen
- ♥ **Eleanor Bronson Hodge** from Meredith Golden & Bob Chen
- ♥ **Irwin and Liz Golden** from Meredith Golden & Bob Chen
- ♥ **Aya Spektor** from Elena Gorlovsky & Maury Goldman
- ♥ **Peter Hahn and Margaret Hoenig-Hahn** from Peter Hoenig
- ♥ **Mavis Crocker** from Dorothea & David Hosom
- ♥ **Holger and Friederun Jannasch** from Hans & Elizabeth Jannasch
- ♥ **Beth Schwarzman** from Aimlee Laderman
- ♥ **Ezra Laderman** from Aimlee Laderman
- ♥ **Barbara A. Lankow** from Richard Lankow
- ♥ **Rear Admiral Ed Peebles** from Janet E. Peebles
- ♥ **Dr. Lewis P. Rowland** from Esther Rowland
- ♥ **Dr. Norman M. Starosta** from Peter & Cynthia Starosta
- ♥ **Jayne Starosta** from Peter & Cynthia Starosta
- ♥ **Al Allenby** from Lee & Lou Turner
- ♥ **Geneo McAuliffe** from May Lou Welch and Jane & Justin Wickens
- ♥ **James Clark** from Mary Lou Welch



Elizabeth Saito

In Praise of Beech Leaves

by Elizabeth Saito, columnist for the Falmouth Enterprise and author

I think the greatest of the many pleasures I've savored walking the new OPET trails is closely watching the leafing out of the beech trees clustered on the southern ridge and descending into the natural amphitheater. It's a grand and beautiful drama that never fails to move me, year after year.

I love how their spear-like buds begin to swell and lengthen in early spring as the days themselves lengthen. Then the leaves emerge, unfurling from the slim, brown bud their broad green biomass. It's a metamorphosis of astonishing proportion.

Have you ever touched young beech leaves? They're exquisite: soft, pliant, as light and bright as tissue paper. And this spring I appreciated for the first time how the near weightless bud husks lie scattered on the ground like out-of-season wheat chaff.

But those young leaves harden, and then the caterpillars hatch and begin their insatiable destruction. Robert Frost put it so well in his poem 'Nothing Gold Can Stay,' which reads in its entirety:

*"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early's leaves a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay."*

But even with their leaves ravaged by those caterpillars, so numerous their falling scat sounds like rain, mature beeches provide shade ample enough to inhibit the growth of most understory plants. This creates a feeling of open spaciousness, and gives the walker a unique depth of vision within the forest.

There is so much to see and feel in nature. And I am so grateful to live near this plot of conservation land, whose small size belies its huge ecological diversity.

And I'm also grateful to Wendi Buessler who labeled the grove off the main trail as the "Beech Fairy Grove." It's so nice to see fancy and whimsy given their place on the map.



A Tip for Improving Oyster Pond—Maintain a Vegetated Buffer along Water Shorelines.

Keep the vegetation along your shoreline in as natural a state as possible (it is also a town law, by the way!). This buffer helps to trap and filter pollutants before they enter the pond. It also provides valuable habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife. Plus it helps keep those pesky over-wintering Canada geese off your property. Consider adding native plants if you wish to extend your buffer.



We have a new logo! The oyster shell was a beloved logo for many years, but we felt it was time for something new. The resurgence of the osprey populations across our region is something to celebrate. Osprey numbers plummeted with the use of DDT and other pesticides in the 1950s and 1960s. Populations started to return once DDT was banned in 1972. Now there are over 100 pairs just on Martha's Vineyard alone. The osprey platform built and put up by OPET in 2006 is occupied as well as five nearby nesting platforms. This resurgence is proof that positive environmental actions can make a difference. That is the perfect symbol for OPET.

We are sad to announce that OPET is cancelling our Annual Meeting this summer. There is too much uncertainty with the Covid-19 virus. We will miss seeing all of our members and friends. We hope to see you next year!
Stay Safe and Healthy!



**The Oyster Pond
Environmental Trust**
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