



OPET Annual Meeting Thursday, August 14, 7 pm Woodwell Climate Research Center

“At the Confluence:
Inquiry, Creativity, and
Connection to Place”

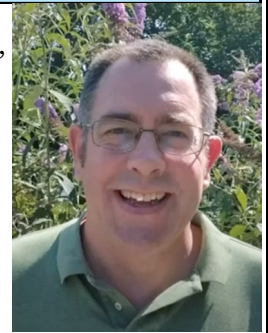
Scientist and artist Mike Palmer has called the Waquoit Bay watershed home for over 15 years. A former federal fisheries scientist, Mike spent nearly two decades studying marine



ecosystems from Alaska to New England. In 2022, he embraced his lifelong passion for art and founded the Waquoit Bay Fish Company. Now a restoration ecologist with the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, Mike works on river and bog restoration projects. Blending science, art, and storytelling, Mike will share a career shaped by a lifelong connection to water including projects that translate complex data into human narratives, from collaborative art exhibits with local fishermen to interactive fish monitoring tools.

A Message from Alfredo Aretxabaleta, *OPET President*

As the summer sun stretches across the Oyster Pond watershed, we are once again reminded of the quiet strength of this place. The tall beech, oak, and pine trees, the vegetation at the pond’s edge, the slow flow of water through the land... all of it speaks to a larger story, one that is deeply rooted in conservation.



At OPET, land and watershed conservation is more than a mission. It is a promise. A promise to protect the ecological health of Oyster Pond, to preserve the character of our neighborhood, and to ensure that our actions today benefit not only ourselves, but also the generations who will follow.

Land conservation in our watershed isn’t just good for nature; it delivers tangible value to our members, our neighbors, the Town of Falmouth, and the global community. Every acre (or hectare for us scientists) we protect filters excess nutrients before they reach the pond. Every parcel that remains undeveloped helps control stormwater, stabilize climate impacts, and preserve biodiversity. These benefits ripple outward in ways we can measure, and in ways that enrich our lives.

According to the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, open space reduces municipal costs, increases nearby property values, and contributes to the local economy by attracting visitors and supporting outdoor recreation. Studies show that protected open space in Massachusetts adds *billions* in natural services each year, from flood control and air purification to carbon storage and drinking water protection. For a coastal community like ours, these services are not luxuries—they are lifelines.

But the value of land conservation cannot be measured in dollars alone. It is the moment a child spots their first turtle in the shallows. It is the quiet walk a neighbor takes on a summer morning. It is the cooling shade of the trees during a heatwave and the absence of traffic where wildlife roams safely. It is the understanding that this place, Oyster Pond and the land that surrounds it, is worth protecting.

Our work at OPET reflects this understanding. This summer, we continue to monitor pond health, advocate for smart land-use decisions, and partner with the Town of Falmouth to ensure that the watershed remains resilient in the face of sea level rise, development pressure, and climate change. We also continue to educate and engage, because conservation thrives when communities are involved and informed. And while our work is deeply local, its impact reaches far. Each conserved parcel of land, each buffer zone, each protected wetland contributes to a global effort to restore balance between people and the planet.

We are grateful for the continued support of our members, volunteers, and partners. Your generosity sustains this work. Your voices elevate it. And your love for this place makes all the difference. This summer, we invite you to walk the trails and take a moment to reflect on what conservation means to you. For us at OPET, it means home, hope, and a future we can be proud to help shape, together.

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

President - Alfredo Aretxabaleta
Treasurer - Matt O'Connor

Directors:
John Dowling Dana Rodin
Jennifer Goebel Olivia Schmidt
Bill Kerfoot Jonathan Smith
Steve Leighton James Wilson

Administrator - Chris Brothers
Visit our web site at

www.opet.org

Or send us an email at
info@opet.org

OPET Board meetings are open to all OPET members. Meetings are at 4:30 pm on the second or third Sunday of the month at Treetops Clubhouse or through Zoom.

*We are a 501(c)(3) organization.
Contributions are tax deductible.
Tax Id number—04-3278142*



Scan this QR code to go directly to the OPET website.



A Red-winged Blackbird harasses an Osprey over Oyster Pond.

Photo: Len Greer

Gifts in honor of:

- ♥ Christine Brothers from Susanne and William Hallstein
- ♥ Jennifer Goebel from Julie and Andrés Diaz
- ♥ Mindy Hall from Leslie Hall
- ♥ Mrs. Patricia Elichalt from Peter Starosta
- ♥ Bill Klimm from Mary L. Klimm
- ♥ Dr. Cecily Selby from Nina Allen
- ♥ Mike and Eileen Spall from Ken Foreman and Anne Giblin
- ♥ Lee R. Turner from John V. Frank

Gifts in memory of:

- ♥ Leonard and Helen Beford from Melissa Beford
- ♥ Frank Driscoll from Meredith Golden and Bob Chen
- ♥ Robert Hurd from Mrs. Booje Calfee
- ♥ Robert Livingstone from Mrs. Booje Calfee
- ♥ Dr. Cheryl Ann Palm from Meredith Golden and Bob Chen
- ♥ RADM Edward M. Peebles from Ellen Peebles
- ♥ Frances and John Powers from Martha Powers
- ♥ Dr. Lewis P. Rowland from Esther Rowland
- ♥ Dr. Norman Starosta from Peter Starosta
- ♥ Jayne Starosta from Peter Starosta
- ♥ Ms. Evelyn Steele from Meredith Golden and Bob Chen
- ♥ Louis C. Turner from Lee R. Turner
- ♥ Louis C. Turner from Denise Backus
- ♥ Dr. George Woodwell from Thomas and Ann Stone

Being Lazy is Good for the Pond

by Jennifer Goebel OPET Board Member

Whether you are an active pond paddler and swimmer, or prefer a more laid back approach to your pond enjoyment, taking in the sun-sparkled waters or the foggy mornings, Oyster Pond is a big part of our enjoyment of where we live. As homeowners near a pond, we bear the responsibility for keeping the pond healthy. The constant assaults of human habitation--building and maintenance of dwellings, gardening and landscaping of yards, and infrastructure like roads and parking areas--can be mitigated by how we choose to manage our activity.



Sweet pepperbush in bloom along the banks of Oyster Pond. Photo: Barry Norris

One of the best, cheapest, and least time and labor-intensive things you can do is allow a natural vegetated buffer to develop around the pond. Vegetated buffers will spring up naturally if we allow them to. They may need a little assistance from us to remove the invasive plants (looking at you, knotweed!), but other than that, just let nature do its thing for the first 100 feet from the pond, and we will all reap the benefits!

A vegetated buffer should consist of native trees, shrubs, and plants, as well as natural litter--no vegetable gardens, fences or other structures, manicured lawns, septic systems, or ornamental plants should be in the buffer.

In return for this lack of investment, we get so much! Dense populations of different kinds of plants lead to healthy, deep roots of different sizes that help keep soil in place, reducing erosion. The shade from the taller plants and trees helps keep water cool in the summer, reducing

the likelihood of harmful algal blooms, including cyanobacteria, that can bloom in the hot summer months. Cyanobacteria is particularly dangerous, as it can poison animals, including dogs, and people who come into contact with it. Oyster Pond is monitored biweekly for cyanobacteria during the summer.

Vegetated buffers help trap and filter runoff from fertilizers and other excess nutrients, improving water quality and making the pond a healthier ecosystem. The dense vegetation also increases the ability of the soil to hold water, which helps reduce damage from storms. And, the vegetated buffers provide cover for nesting birds and hatchlings, as well as habitat for insects, frogs, turtles, minks, and other species.

Less work for us battling natural succession around the pond means we get the free ecosystem services of stormwater control, water quality improvement, temperature regulation, and habitat for our native plants and animals. And who doesn't love free stuff?

So this summer, when the urge to grab your garden shears and trim back the growth around the pond hits you, find a nice chair with a view of the pond, watch the Ospreys dive for fish, and listen to the chatter of the Red-winged Blackbirds instead. Or jump in!



Photo: Jennifer Goebel

For more information on how to create vegetated buffers near wetlands see the Cape Cod Freshwater Pond Buffer Guidance from the Cape Cod Commission.

2025 Lou Turner Trunk River Herring Count

by Matt O'Connor, OPET Treasurer

The spring Trunk River Herring Count, named after long-time herring counter Lou Turner, was a mixed bag in 2025. On the positive side, we had more volunteer herring counters than we've had in recent years with a total of 27 scheduled counters and substitutes. Their efforts resulted in 456 ten-minute counts over 58 days. This count total was a 42% increase over 2024 efforts!

On the negative side, we only counted 2,076 herring swimming upstream to spawn. This was 49% fewer herring than were counted in 2024 and 13% fewer than in 2023 when we did only half as many counts.

There are several possible reasons for the lower number of herring counted this year. One is that last year's total may have been unusually high. Another possible explanation is that spotting the herring is, largely, a matter of luck. The counting protocols we follow are provided by the MA Department of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC), which coordinates the counts on Cape Cod. Our counts only cover 80 to 90 minutes of the 12-hour daily time frame we were asked to monitor (9:00 am to 9:00 pm).

Finally, over the years the herring migration on the Trunk River has proven to be primarily a night-time occurrence. We believe this is because the transition from the ocean to the fresh-water ponds via a very shallow and exposed stream is an extremely perilous journey, especially during daylight hours. It's not unusual to see many, many cormorants, gulls, Ospreys, eiders, herons, harbor seals, and even larger fish congregate near the mouth of the river in search of a meal of fresh herring. The herring born in Oyster Pond seem to understand this.

This year, once again, we saw evidence of significant migration activity well after dark and in the wee hours of the morning, but were unable to report this because it occurred outside of our prescribed counting window.

Most herring counts in eastern Massachusetts take place much further inland than ours at Trunk River. Herring behavior is likely to be quite different at these inland sites than at Trunk River. However, DMF and APCC require consistent counting procedures at all the counting sites so that results among sites can be reliably compared. OPET is discussing with both APCC and DMF possibly modifying our protocols in the future to include more nighttime counts, perhaps with infrared cameras.

We'd like to thank our team of faithful, dedicated volunteers. Not only did they collect data, but they also served as vital environmental stewards as they patiently answered questions from curious bystanders like, "What are you doing?" or "Are the herring running this year?" The public education about these protected fish that herring counters provide might be almost as important as the numbers they tally.

Many thanks to: Alfredo Aretxabaleta, Paula Beckerle, Samantha Broun, Brad Butman, Jay Burnett, Michael Casso, Elizabeth Davies, Michelle Donabed, Jackie Ferguson, Hap Garritt, Jennifer Goebel, Gordon Juric, Pat Keoughan, Vicky Lowell, Deb Maquire, Laura McDonnell, Cindy Moore, Kate Morkeski, Andrew Nelson, Matt O'Connor, Christy Resendes, Rob Rosenthal, Celia Shulz, K. E. Sekararum, Margaret Sulanowska, Gisela and Peter Tillier, and Erin Truman.



Herring count coordinator Matt O'Connor records herring as they navigate Trunk River in mid-May. For more information about the herring count, contact Matt at occonnorscapecod@gmail.com. Photo: Chris Brothers.

Species Spotlight: Snapping Turtles

by Chris Brothers, OPET Administrator

Massachusetts is home to ten species of terrestrial and freshwater turtles, the largest and most formidable looking of these is the snapping turtle which can grow up to 19 inches in length. They are found throughout the state in every kind of fresh water habitat from vernal pool, to bog, to marshes, to rivers.

If you've encountered a snapping turtle, most likely it was crossing a road, possibly on its way to lay eggs in a field, yard, or area with loose soil or sand. Females dig the nest where it will get enough sunlight to incubate the 20-40 small ping pong ball-looking eggs. The sex of most turtles, and the length of incubation, is dependent on their incubation temperature. For snapping turtles, temperatures from 73 to 81 Fahrenheit produce males, while females result from lower and higher temperatures.

Turtles show high nest site fidelity and will return to the same area each year, sometime for decades, to lay their eggs. Nesting season is late May to early July with hatchlings emerging in late August to early October. The baby turtles head instinctively to their home pond and receive no parental care.

Eggs and young turtles are prey to foxes, skunks, weasels, raccoons, herons and other birds, frogs, and fish. While only about 10% of hatchlings make it to adulthood, once they do, they may live 50 to 100 years. Adult snapping turtles are omnivorous apex predators, sitting at the top of their pond food web, and as scavengers, help recycle nutrients by eating dead animals. They become increasingly vegetarian as they get older.

All turtles need to bask in the sun to regulate their body temperatures produce vitamin D, and keep their shells disease and parasite free. Snapping turtles typically bask by floating in the water with just the top of their shells exposed, or in shallow water, they sink into the mud with just their heads above water. In the winter, snapping turtles bury themselves in the mud at the bottom of the pond, slow their metabolism, and breathe through membranes in their mouths and throat. They may become active temporarily during warmer periods.



A Snapping Turtle (Chelydra serpentina) lays her eggs near Oyster Pond in mid-June. Photo: Jonathan Smith

Although they are not endangered, snapping turtle populations are declining due to habitat loss, being hit by cars, and being harvested as food.

If you come across any type of turtle in your yard, the best thing is to just leave it alone. Many well-intentioned people want to move the turtle to a "better" location, but this will just expose turtles to more dangers as they try to get back to their home territory. You may want to help protect the nest by putting a screen or fence around it.

If you find a turtle in the road, the best thing to do is move it across the road in the direction it was heading if you can safely do so. For snapping turtles, the best way to do so is by pushing them with a broom or something similar, rather than picking them up. Never pick up any turtle by its tail as it will injure the turtle. Snapping turtles can only safely be held from directly behind with one hand on the top shell (the carapace) and one on the bottom shell (the plastron). Be careful! Snapping turtles are very flexible and surprisingly fast! If you try to hold the shell anywhere along the side, you are going to get a very painful bite!

The Osprey nest on Oyster Pond on June 17 this year with three chicks. OPET erected this Osprey nesting platform in 2007 on town conservation land on the southwest corner of Oyster Pond. It took a couple of years for Ospreys to discover the pole, but a pair has successfully raised chicks every summer since then.

Photo: Drew Forsberg Photography



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149 Woods Hole Road, Falmouth
Refreshments will be served

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The Oyster Pond Environmental Trust

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