



The Watershed

Vol. 11, No. 1

The Oyster Pond Environmental Trust Newsletter
OPET, P.O. Box 496, Woods Hole, MA 02543-0496

Winter 2006
www.opet.org

Dear OPET Members

In 1996 a group of neighbors around Oyster Pond came together to form the Oyster Pond Environmental Trust. Since then OPET has seen many changes and we thank all of our generous donors for their past support. In the past three years in particular, OPET's activities have dramatically increased. We are much more proactive, taking on projects of a wide and diverse nature to protect Oyster Pond and its watershed.

All of these projects have cost money, but our major annual expenses are in these categories:

- OPET now has an Executive Assistant, Wendi Buessler, to monitor activities that impact the pond and to produce our newsletter. Many of our activities could only happen because we now have this representative. Wendi attends Town committee meetings, interacts regularly with Town employees, samples the pond every month and maintains the opening to Trunk River, to name a few of her responsibilities. Having a representative allows us to complete many projects and provides a presence in Town Hall that gives OPET a "seat at the table" in Falmouth's environmental issues.
- We have expanded the work started by the Pond Watchers and are now sampling the pond for oxygen levels, temperature, salinity and nutrients every month, year round.
- We donate money to Spohr Gardens and they in turn, give us storage space, allowing us to centralize our records and equipment. We work closely with this fellow non-profit and Oyster Pond neighbor to the point where we share a trustee on each other's boards.
- And of course, organizations such as ours require liability insurance.

For the past two years, our expenditures have exceeded our income. The OPET Board is proud of the projects we have undertaken. We feel that these activities have enhanced our watershed, and we hope that you feel the same way. We need your help if we are to continue with our work.

We hope you will consider increasing your annual contribution to OPET so we don't have to cut back on our activities to protect our Pond. If you are not already a member of OPET we hope you will consider joining as a supporting member. If all of our Regular Members became Supporting Members, half of our shortfall would be covered. Our activities on the pond not only keep it a beautiful place, but also help to maintain your property values.

Please read inside for additional information on OPET's activities from the past year. If you have questions, please feel free to contact any member of the board.

Sincerely,

OPET Board of Directors



Plant Inventory Finds nearly 100 Species in Zinn Park



Mario DeGregorio leading a nature walk through Zinn Park in September.

These pages are a partial review of OPET's activities from this past year.

As you can see, OPET is involved in a wide range of activities.

Your support allows us to continue this valuable work.

OPET hired the well known botanist, Mario DeGregorio to do an inventory of the plants growing in OPET's seven acre Zinn Park. Mario is founder of the Botanical Club of Cape Cod and the Islands, and author of several natural history books, including *A Vanishing Heritage: Wildflowers of Cape Cod*.

At the cost of \$1,000, Mario conducted six plant surveys starting in late April and finishing with "A Botanical Tour of Zinn Park" in September. Nearly 100 plant species were found, 80% of which are native. This is a higher percentage than the state average of 65% native plants found in most natural landscapes. This demonstrates that although the parcel is relatively small, it has fine natural diversity. This information will be

used to develop a land management plan for Zinn Park.

Unfortunately, Mario also identified a number of exotic invasive plant species, (luckily NOT Phragmites), that should be removed. Fortunately, most are in manageable numbers. The most problematic is bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*) which is growing thickly under a magnificent linden tree near Mosquito Creek. OPET is scheduling a work day this spring to clear the area of honeysuckle. This would be an ideal spot for a bench to sit and enjoy the quiet beauty of Zinn Park.

Trunk River Maintenance

Maintaining an opening in Trunk River for the passage of migrating herring is another visible OPET project. In coordination with Chuck Martinsen, the herring warden, OPET works with the town to keep this important fishway open. Despite the jetties and weir, sometimes old-fashioned manual labor is needed to clear out sand, gravel and seaweed from the river. Keeping the water flowing in Trunk River also keeps the pond level low and helps prevent algae from growing on the lagoon as we saw two summers ago. Members also monitor the river during the spring migration of returning herring, dismantling poachers' illegal dams when needed.

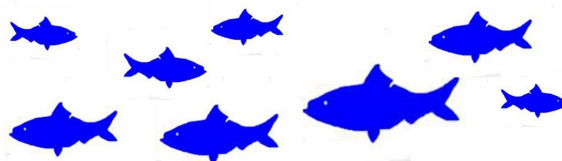
As part of the effort to keep the River open, OPET posted three signs this summer at the Trunk River bridge to dissuade the public from putting rocks in the river. As many of you have seen, children (of all ages) love to play in this water and espe-

cially like building little dams across the river. The problem is these dams catch ocean debris carried in by high tides, further blocking the river's outflow. Hopefully the following signs are making a difference.

This is a "fish highway".

Please do not place rocks in the River!

It blocks the passage of migrating Herring & Eels.



Thank you for protecting the wildlife and pond! Oyster Pond Environmental Trust

View of Oyster Pond from Bike Path Restored

Perhaps the most visible example of OPET's work this past year was the removal of the invasive plant *Phragmites australis* from along the bike path on the southern shore of Oyster Pond. For the first time in years, users of the bike path can see Oyster Pond!

Long time OPET members will remember former OPET President Birgit Rose's warning in the Winter 2000 newsletter that *Phragmites* was moving into Oyster Pond and smothering the natural vegetation around the pond. Since then many more native cat-tails, bay berry bushes and other marsh plants that provide important wildlife habitat have vanished underneath the relentless march of *Phragmites*.



Before and after pictures showing the restored views of Oyster Pond from the bike path.



In September OPET started the enormous task of trying to eradicate, or more realistically control, this exotic invasive. A dozen volunteers worked all morning to clear 100 feet of the southern shoreline along the bike path. Another group tackled a smaller patch of *Phragmites* from the small wetland at the northern end of the pond near Treetops.

Cutting and treating *Phragmites* is a very labor intensive task. The only sure control method is to cut each cane and place a few drops of Rodeo herbicide into each hollow stem. (Rodeo is a wetland safe equivalent of Roundup). OPET had to hire a licensed pesticide applicator to apply the herbicide as is required by law.

This first effort cost OPET over \$400, which included a courtesy discount of \$300 by Jeff Hamilton, the pesticide applicator. A large portion of these costs were for disposal; the cut debris filled a very large pickup truck. OPET is contacting the Town of Falmouth to see if the Town can help by providing a location to burn or bury the *Phragmites* debris. If you look at the large amount of *Phragmites* remaining along the pond you can see that OPET is facing a large expense in the future.

The Value of Year Round Sampling of Oyster Pond

Nearly every month, weather permitting, Wendi Buessler, OPET Exec Assistant and Kate Bulygina of the Woods Hole Research Center, circle the pond in a small boat to sample at 7 locations at the pond, weir and lagoon. This effort was started in 2005 to augment the sampling by the volunteer Pond watchers who sample only in July and August. Year around sampling offers a more complete view of the Pond's condition; showing seasonal and interannual trends in the water quality. Temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity, salinity, and water clarity are measured in the field while samples are collected to be analyzed for concentrations of nitrate, ammonium, total nitrogen, and total phosphorus at the Woods Hole Research Center. This summer testing for chlorophyll *a* and silica were added to the testing regime.

Testing for chlorophyll and silica gives us information on the biology of Oyster Pond. It will help us understand how aquatic plants are responding to the influx of nutrient rich groundwaters from surrounding septic systems.

All plants contain the green pigment chlorophyll and the amount of chlorophyll in the water column is an indicator of how much algae or phytoplankton are present. High chlorophyll concentrations indicate an over abundance of the plants and in turn the presence of high nutrient levels. When nutrient levels are high and temperature and other conditions are right, phytoplankton can grow rapidly and create algae blooms. Measuring silica will tell us what types of phytoplankton are growing in Oyster Pond. Silica is the building block for diatoms, a single celled variety of algae.

Processing six months of these samples cost OPET \$1232. These costs do not include the labor involved and the Woods Hole Research Center generously donates the time of their employee to collect the samples. Monitoring the Pond over time is important for understanding if and how the Pond is changing.

OPET Plans to Install Osprey Platform

Over the summer OPET Board Members Barry Norris and Lou Turner completed work on an osprey platform.

For several years now, OPET has planned to place a platform on the pond. Discussion is still underway as to where it will be placed. Possible locations include on the shore at Spohr Garden or at the southern end of the Pond. Where it will end up will depend on which site meets several criteria.

Osprey are incredibly territorial. "If they can see another nest nearby they will continually harass the other

occupants, so much so that they will neglect their own chicks," says Bob Prescott of the Massachusetts Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. "As a consequence, both sets of chicks fail to



thrive." Therefore, any Oyster Pond platform needs to be located out of sight of the Salt Pond nest and the nest on the WHOI campus.

No matter where OPET eventually decides to put up the platform, we will need extra help in hoisting up the pole and platform.

Board Member News

Robert King has stepped down from the OPET Board, where he sat as its president for the past three years, having served the maximum six consecutive years allowed under the bylaws. Rob has an interest and curiosity in and understanding of the "workings" of Oyster Pond which will be missed on our Board. We hope he will stay in touch, and we thank him for his many years of work and dedication to our Pond which we are sure will continue in the future!

OPET welcomes two new board members:

Al Allenby has lived on Oyster Pond since 1930 when he moved into the house on Fells Road his family built as a summer home. He has lived there year around since 1988 when he retired as a minister, teacher and college counselor.

Barbara Doe lives part time at the extensively renovated house on the edge of the pond at Oyster Pond Road. She once worked as a teacher and social worker, but is now a stay-at-home Mom.

Future Plans

Zinn Park Plans

Now that the plant survey is completed on Zinn Park, OPET is looking at ways to improve the land.

The number one priority is to remove the exotic invasive plants that are in the park. Luckily, so far, these are for the most in small numbers. The largest concentration of invasives is at the foot of a glorious linden tree. Once the bush honeysuckle is cleared away, OPET plans on putting a bench at this location.



Native Wood Aster

Discussion is also under way to identify some of the interesting plants that grow in the Park and to create a pamphlet trail guide for visitors to use as they walk along the paths.

OPET Calendar

Early Spring — Osprey Platform Installation

Late Spring — Invasive Plant Removal in Zinn Park

July — OPET Annual Meeting

Late August or early September — Phragmites Removal Work Day

Officers & Directors 2006—2007

President - Lou Turner	Susan Gagosian
Vice President - Michael McNaught	Max Holmes
Clerk - Bill Kerfoot	Dana Rodin
Treasurer - Barry Norris	Arthur Silverstein
Directors	Peter Valtin
Allen Allenby	<i>Executive Assistant</i> - Wendi Buessler
Barbara Doe	
John Dowling	<i>Hon. Board Member</i> Robert Livingstone

OPET Board meetings are open to all OPET members. Meetings are usually held on the third Sunday of the month, at 4:30 pm in the Treetops Clubhouse.

We'd love to have you come!

OPET does not have an official phone, but you can leave a message at 508-540-3263. We'll gladly get back to you!

Or email lturns67@adelphia.net or bisler@adelphia.net.

Please visit our website www.opet.org.