

Six Ponds News

(www.sixponds.org) October 2006

An occasional Publication of the Six Ponds Improvement Association

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Six Ponds Association elected the following people to the Executive Committee as Officers -- Leighton Price (President), Roger Monks (Vice President), Walter Morrison (Treasurer), and Doug Post (Secretary).

The Six Ponds Association also elected nine Members-at-Large to the Executive Committee (all of these names are listed later in the newsletter). The people who have been newly elected as Members-at-large are Pat Grace, Charlotte Russell and Jessica Schultz.

The board extends its thanks to Ed Russell who served as President, to Dave Buckman who served as Vice President and to Steve Fairchild who served as one of the Members-at-Large this past year.

The board will continue to address issues and concerns regarding water quality, public health and safety, protection of the environment, development, roads and traffic, broader community issues, and other items which directly or indirectly affect the quality of life in the Six Ponds area.

Any member of the Six Ponds Association who is interested in or concerned about topics and issues being considered by the board is welcome to attend board meetings and participate in discussions. Moreover, don't hesitate to ask the board to consider other topics as well.

Again, we want to thank camp Wind-In-The-Pines for hosting our annual dinner and thank the Pinewoods Camp for providing great musical entertainment.

The Bridge at Long Pond, circa 1900



The bridge over the brook to Little Long. The Pierce House, destroyed in the forest fire of 1900. (Mabel (Pierce-Woodard) Mitchell birth place)

(photo courtesy Janette and Wes Somerville)

Renewal of More Extensive Water Quality Testing

The Executive Committee of the Six Ponds Association and association members in attendance at the Annual Potluck Dinner in August approved a proposal to renew water quality testing in order to monitor and preserve the quality of our pond water.

In a first phase, water samples will be collected at each of the sixteen locations that had been sampled when we last conducted a rather complete sampling of the six ponds. With the aid of GPS equipment which will guide us to the same locations we sampled previously, a few volunteers will collect top samples. This sampling will begin in late September before "pond turnover" occurs and while nutrient levels are still high in the upper thermocline layer. The testing will focus not only on E. Coli levels, but on many other applicable categories of chemical analysis as well. This will give us a more complete picture of the condition

of water in our ponds than we have had for three years.

At other times during the year, and at no cost to Six Ponds members, water quality will be tested at a larger number of locations using YSI equipment borrowed from the town. This equipment gathers data on a number of chemical parameters related to water quality. As the equipment is lowered into the water at each sampling location, it gathers data throughout the entire water column.

During the winter months, efforts will be made by members of the Executive committee to compile a report on data obtained to date and update information on our web sites. We will also renew efforts to obtain further funding from the Town of Plymouth for a portion of the water quality testing that we would like to do. If this financial aid is granted, we will be able to bring our database up-to-date and to enhance our

testing in some areas we deem are in need of special attention.

Those areas could include failed septic systems, problems with road runoff chemicals, high phosphate levels due to lawn fertilizers, etc. We will also assemble testing data collected by various other organizations that sample our ponds in order to meet state health requirements regarding E.coli levels.

After the "spring turnover" of our ponds, bottle samples of water will again be taken. The number of samples collected and analyzed will depend on the funds available. In any event, at that time, we will use the YSI equipment to test the water quality at all of the locations we tested the last time that we did a rather complete study of all six ponds.

Please feel free to contact Steve Abbott, Rusty Briggs, Leighton Price or Ed Russell with any observations regarding your pond's water quality.

Six Ponds Executive Committee 2006-2007

Leighton Price (President)
Roger Monks (Vice President)
Douglas Post (Secretary)
Walter Morrison (Treasurer)
Steve Abbott
Aileen Chase
Pat Grace
Larry Rosenblum
Charlotte Russell
Margie Saunders
Judy Savage
Jessica Schultz
Chris Schelleng

Please join/renew/update your member information!

Included with this newsletter is your 2006 membership form.

Dues for the Six Ponds Association are \$10 per family per year. Payment of your dues and any additional donation you may wish to make will go to the support of the Association in protecting our ponds and our common interests as residents.

Thank you

Long Pond, Little Long Pond, Halfway Pond, Gallows Pond, Round Pond, Bloody Pond

STORM WATER RUNOFF UPDATE

At the Six Ponds Annual Meeting in August, we discussed the fact that, in recent years, substantial quantities of *E.coli* have been detected in storm water flowing from storm drains that empty into the stream between Little Long Pond and Long Pond. We also discussed the finding that significant quantities of salt and chemical components of salts have shown up in several of our ponds that have paved roads and storm drains channeling storm water into them.

Larry Rosenblum volunteered to raise these issues with the Plymouth Director of Public Works, and both Larry and Leighton Price plan to meet with him to discuss these further.

Road runoff is a very important problem because it contains many contaminants and pollutants that drain into our ponds. If we were to do extensive tests of road runoff, we would also likely find that automobile oil, gasoline and carcinogenic additives are running off our roads and into our ponds as well. Likewise, pet feces, car washing detergents, fertilizers, pesticides and other poisons wash down our driveways and drain from our lawns to make their way into our ponds. Many of these same contaminants run directly into our ponds from our pond-side properties where there are inadequate vegetated buffers to impede them.

As development and traffic steadily increase, it becomes very important for the Town of Plymouth to recognize and to implement environmentally sensitive solutions to handling road runoff. Likewise, it is important for the Town of Plymouth to ensure that developers and homeowners use construction practices which do not compound storm water runoff problems by failing to retain yard runoff on private properties. The long-standing practice of directing storm water runoff to the nearest storm drain in the street and channeling runoff to the nearest stream or open body of water should no longer be acceptable.

The Six Ponds Association will remain active in pursuit of solutions to this continuing problem by working to effect change and improvement in the municipal response to this problem; and we also urge all members to take whatever steps are available to limit these types of runoff into our ponds, streams.

ANNUAL MEETING POT LUCK SUPPER

Regrettably, after approximately 10 years of happily holding the Six Ponds Annual Meeting at the Russell's Hall, the time had come to move to a new location. We all thank the Russell family for hosting us during this time and for their generosity. On August 26th the Girl Scout camp, Wind in the Pines, warmly welcomed us back after our long absence. The staff made the transition an easy one and we would like to extend our thanks for all the help they gave us. In appreciation, if you would like to help them by lending a hand during their TENTS DOWN WEEKEND of OCTOBER 21/22, they are looking for all sorts of assis-

tance. The tasks range from bringing in docks and taking down tents, to cooking and serving the meals for the hungry workers. It would be the neighborly thing to lend a helping hand to our fellow Six Ponder. If you are available and would like to assist in this effort, please call TENNEY LANTZ 508-923-0800 Ext. 15, or e-mail to, tlanz@gscsm.org Thank you !!

In planning the Annual Meeting Pot Luck Supper, Six Ponds neighbors' and Pinewoods' board members Henry Chapin and Lois Post thought the gathering might enjoy seeing some of the Pinewood's music and dance up close. As a result, we were all treated to a wonderful performance of song and dance by members of the Pinewoods staff. A dozen or so of the summer crew showed up with instruments and dancing shoes to provide both entertainment and a little history about the camp. From the spirited performances, it was evident that the Pinewoods Camp welcomed the opportunity to show off its stuff.

The evening's program started off with a lively Irish jig played by several talented fiddlers, followed by a demonstration of some free form clog dancing. After a brief explanation of the history of English traditional dance, a team of six dancers then followed with a fast paced, tightly choreographed dance with "rapper" swords. With swords flashing and feet flying, the dancers wove complicated patterns in and around each other's rapper swords, keeping pace with the music from the fiddle and creating complimentary rhythms with their feet. The evening ended with a song and a New England contra dance for the 100 or so attendees, it was one of the more enjoyable and livelier Six Pond Annual Meetings!

The Pinewoods Camp founding and evolution is an interesting story. Almost 90 years ago, Boston philanthropist Helen Storrow started the dance camp that was to become Pinewoods. Storrow was interested in both scouting and dance and she not only founded Pinewoods but also donated the land for three Girl Scout Camps on Long, Little Long and Round Pond (Camp Storrow, Four Winds Camp, and Camp Wind in the Pines). Early programs at Pinewoods focused on family camping and English and Morris dancing.

Pinewoods Camp now accommodates 140 campers each week during the 15 week summer sessions. Programs include sessions offered by the Folk Arts Center of NE, the Country Dance Society and the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society. The camp attracts music and dance lovers from all over the world. Pond neighbors are invited to come on Sunday evenings from mid July to the end of August to join the dancing! The talent and enthusiasm displayed by the Pinewoods campers and staff will promise to make the evening a memorable one.

Pinewoods Camp has been a valuable partner with Six Ponds Association in helping preserve our area and reciprocally they deserve our support as well.

In case you wonder what the Six Ponds Annual Meeting will do to equal this year's entertainment, why not come next year and find out!

SEPTIC SYSTEM MAINTENANCE REMINDER

Our residential septic systems can seriously degrade the quality of our pond water if they are not properly maintained. In an effort to raise awareness of this problem, the Six Ponds Association board periodically issues reminders on the importance of establishing scheduled maintenance and inspection of these important waste disposal systems.

The care of septic systems is important to both our local environment and to our pocketbooks. Unfortunately, we do not get users manuals on how to maintain them and since replacement can typically cost \$5,000 to \$20,000 or more, they warrant proper care.

First, it is important to understand a few basics about these systems. It isn't the tank that fails; it's the soil in the leaching area, or drain field, connected to the tank that fails. The soil may no longer be able to filter the water as intended because it has become clogged with solids that won't allow the liquid to pass through.

Frequent pumping is the most effective step towards increasing the life of your system by keeping solids from clogging the soil in the leaching field. It is recommended that an average family of 4 individuals pump their septic tank every 2 years. There are many local companies listed in the yellow pages that provide these pumping and inspection services.

In addition to this primary requirement, there are several additional steps to consider for prolonging the life of your system.

•Use a washing machine filter. Washing machines can be one of the leading causes of system failures. The primary culprit is the lint

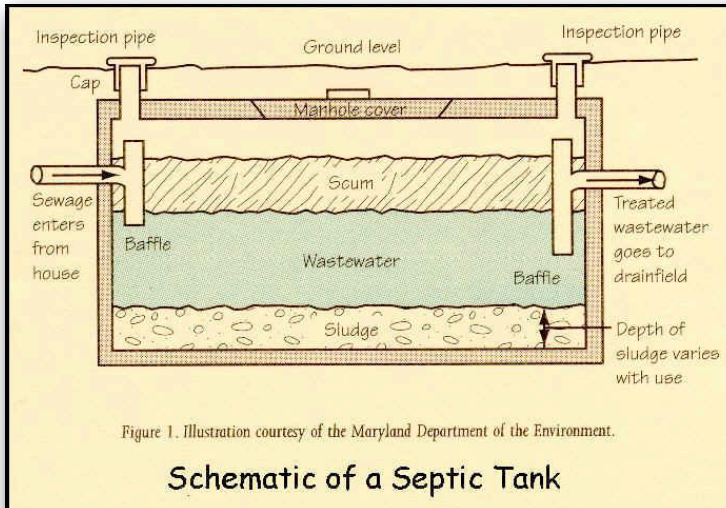


Figure 1. Illustration courtesy of the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Schematic of a Septic Tank

generated during the washing cycle which can clog the soil in the systems drainage fields. This fine lint does not settle to the bottom of the septic tank and is flushed out into the drain field. Compounding this problem is the fact that much of our clothing is manufactured with synthetic materials. These substances are not biodegradable and will not break down in the soil, and once these materials enter the drain field there is no way to remove them.

www.laundry-alternative.com/septic_system_maintenance.htm

•Excessive water usage- Multiple laundry loads in a short period of time puts more water into the system than it is built to handle. The result is that this may cause the system to flush more solids into the drain fields. Also, when you have to replace a washing machine, consider purchasing a front-loading one since it uses far less water than a top-loading machine.

•Water softeners- Softeners can put several hundred additional gallons through your system every week. This, too, can cause more

solids to be flushed into the drain field.

•Effluent filters- Contractors can install effluent filters in the exit baffle of the tank to prevent larger solids from exiting the tank into the drain fields. The cost for this option is approximately \$70- \$100.

www.nsf.org/consumer/wastewater_treatment_systems/wastewater_filters.asp?program=WastewaterTreSys

•Toilet usage- Don't use your toilet as a trash can and do not dump non-degradables in toilets or drains. Do not flush grease, gasoline, paint, plastics, disposable diapers, or any substance that might clog the system or kill beneficial bacteria necessary to proper operation of your septic system.

•Water conservation- Practice water conservation. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets. Use washing machines and dishwashers only when full. Avoid long showers and wherever possible use water saving features in shower heads and faucets.

•Drainage- Divert roof drains and surface water from driveways away from the area of your septic system.

Taking important steps such as these will significantly prolong the useful life of your system, improve the overall impact these systems have on the health of our ponds and aquifers and may save you costly repairs.

There are several Websites that offer detailed descriptions of how septic systems work, instructions relating to proper care and maintenance procedures, as well as information relating state system code requirements, Title V, etc:

<http://www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/wm/files/yoursyst.htm>

www.ago.state.ma.us/filelibrary/title5.pdf

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/brp/wm/faqs/gen.htm>

www.title5inspections.com/care.html