

Six Ponds News

August 2000

An Occasional Publication Of The Six Ponds Improvement Association

Important Meeting!

Plymouth Town Hall on Thursday, August 17th, at 7:00 pm

On July 20th the state unveiled a plan to put a motorbike track along the boundary between Myles Standish State Forest and the town of Plymouth. Such a move would be especially bad for Six Ponds.

Motorbike trails would be directly adjacent to much of the northern end of Mast Road and Wildlands Trust property! We are working hard to preserve the character of Mast Road, and if dirtbikers are allowed to race right next to it, there will be nothing left to preserve. Hikers, horseback riders, bicyclists, and anyone else hoping to enjoy the Forest would be effectively blocked from entering the Forest.

Motorbikes would vastly increase the forest's fire danger! The introduction of plentiful fuel in containers and motorbikes backfiring on narrow trails would put us all at tremendous fire risk. and until the Pinehills Fire Station is eventually built to serve our area, the nearest fire response is fifteen or twenty minutes away.

Motorbike tracks would be located beside people's homes! It is wrong to subject the Martingale, Chardonnay Lane, and Halfway Pond neighborhoods to the noise, dangers, and loss of property values that would come from living next to a dirtbike track. Unless we all stick together, we can expect the peace of our whole area to be eaten away, bit by bit, so when even one neighborhood is threatened this way, all of us must rush to defend it.

Only an overwhelming show of numbers on August 17 can stop this disastrous plan in its tracks!

Six Ponds Annual Meeting

Saturday August 26, 6pm, at Russell Great Hall, 81 Halfway Pond Road (former Camp property, opposite Justine Road). PLEASE COME TO THIS IMPORTANT MEETING!

News Briefs:

• Efforts are underway to help the Wildlands Trust save the Bramhall property that runs from Morgan Road (at Long Pond) across Long Pond Rd. to Route 3. Monies are being raised to reduce the potential development on this property from some 30 houses to a much smaller number that would be east of Long Pond Rd. and not visible from the Road.

• Plans for the new fire station in the Pine Hills Village Green are proceeding. This is a real positive for our area. We desperately need the new station (fire response times to Six Ponds are now the worst in Plymouth), AND we get to save the corner at Long Pond Rd. and Clark Rd. as natural open space.

• The 206 acres between the South High School and Clark Rd. will now be coming to the Town (finally) from the Green Co. to be forever preserved as natural open space. This means that the "entrance" to Six Ponds (both sides of Clark Rd.) will be forever green, and the 206 acres may soon be enjoyed for trail hiking and other passive recreation.

• If you see a "pretty purple spikey flower", it is Purple Loostripe, an incredibly invasive plant which can quickly choke a wetland or waterway. It should be handpulled and burned or otherwise disposed of so that its seeds cannot spread.

Water Quality Sampling

Six Ponds has embarked on a long term water sampling program to keep an eye on some basic water quality characteristics. One sample is drawn from each Pond in the spring, soon after the ice goes out. Because of the seasonal layering effect that occurs in most of the Ponds, this timing helps ensure

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Water Quality *(continued from previous page)*

the sample is representative of the entire Pond. The waters are lab-analyzed for nitrogen and phosphorous, pH, and alkalinity. Water clarity is also measured in the Ponds. The testing is done each year at the same time, in the same place, using the same methods, so that we can compare the results year to year. We now have four years of data – almost enough to begin to look for long-term trends. Happily, this year's results (March, 2000) are pretty boring and show little change from years past.

Results:

Nitrate Nitrogen was at the highest level seen so far in our program in Little Long this spring; Bloody and Long also showed elevated levels relative to previous years. All Six Ponds, however, continue to test well below the generally accepted threshold for concern.

Phosphorous, the nutrient of greatest concern in most freshwater lakes, was highest in Gallows and slightly elevated in Halfway and Round. The levels in all Six Ponds remain below "eutrophic" levels, but algal blooms in Bloody and clarity problems in Little Long mean we must be vigilant in preventing fertilizers and sewage from reaching our Ponds if we wish them to remain clean.

pH levels in all Six Ponds were among the lowest (most acidic) recorded so far in our testing, but still not as low as some of us routinely see in our wells. The soils and waters of our region are naturally on the acidic side of the scale. The native plants that thrive here – pines, oaks, cranberries, blueberries – can do so only in an acidic environment. While we expect the Ponds to be somewhat acid, this is a delicate balance and too much variation in either direction will change the character of the Ponds.

Alkalinity represents the buffering capacity of a water – its resistance to downward (acidic) changes in pH. The alkalinity of our Ponds is naturally low, and remains so. This year saw slightly higher alkalinity results in all Ponds – just

enough to move us away from "critical" for most of the Ponds. Round and Gallows have the lowest levels, suggesting the effects of the liming done 15 years ago have been exhausted.

Water clarity was very low this spring but, rather than taking this as an indicator of poor quality, we believe it shows that the Ponds were well mixed when the samples were taken. A test performed in July in Long Pond gave the greatest clarity recorded since our testing began in 1996.

The data tables for these tests are posted at the new web site. Overall, our Ponds are healthy and clean, especially when compared to many others in Plymouth and the state. In the near term, it is probably our own actions – our sewage, our motorboats, our fertilizers – that will most impact these Six Ponds. The smaller and shallower ponds, Little Long in particular, are extremely vulnerable to incoming pollutants and will require our best efforts to keep them clean. We are stewards of a unique resource – we must act accordingly. We thank Henry Kunhardt and Sam Chapin for carrying out this important program for Six Ponds.

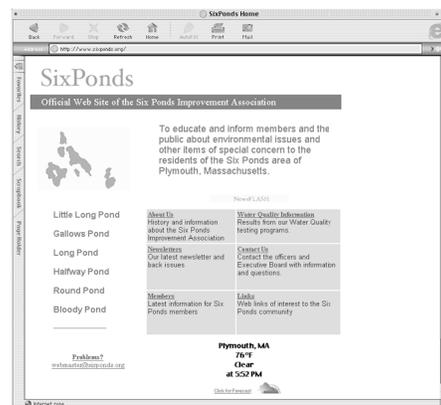
Makepeace Land

On July 26 the Makepeace Co. unveiled their plans to develop their 9,600 acres in Plymouth, Wareham and Carver, including their land along West Long Pond Rd. and Halfway Pond Rd., and between Bourne Rd. and Wareham Rd. Their plans are still general, and they plan to ask the April, 2001 Town Meeting for a zoning change to allow a large mixed use development similar to the Pine Hills. It would include commercial, residential and retail, with clustered village centers using the State Forest as the hub. Their Wareham land near Routes 195 and 495 would get most of the large commercial and retail buildings because of the better access. They claim to have no specific plans for the land near Halfway Pond other than to say it has limited access and thus would be "residential".

Your Board will be watching this project VERY CLOSELY as it develops, and intervening as necessary because of the huge risks it poses to our area. All of our water flows from the Makepeace lands to our Six Ponds and wells, so what happens on Makepeace's land will end up in our drinking water and swimming water. Large residential development will flood our roads with traffic. Halfway Pond area is among the most environmentally sensitive of all our Six Ponds, and we will be striving to keep development away from this pristine area. Your support will be needed, and we welcome joining with the Wildlands Trust, Pinewoods Camp and many others on this effort.

sixponds.org

The Six Ponds Improvement association now has an Internet presence. You can find us on the Web at www.sixponds.org



Please visit our site for NewsFLASH updates and other information of interest. If you have any questions or suggestions, you can email them to:

webmaster@sixponds.org

Also, if you are not on our Internet mailing list, please send an email to:

membership@sixponds.org

and we will add you to our **email alert** system.

Enjoying Our Waterfront Property

The Plymouth Conservation Commission and Six Ponds encourages all property owners to join with them in working to preserve the beauty of Plymouth's Ponds, and offers these suggestions to assist waterfront property owners with their landscape considerations.

Everyone lives in a watershed. Plymouth's drinking water comes from the ground, a sole source aquifer. Septic systems, improper disposal of hazardous wastes, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides all potentially threaten the quality of this drinking water.

Water from every yard and property flows through the ground into our Ponds and wells.

The two top sources of pollution are lawns and septic systems:

Nitrogen and phosphates from these sources stimulate algae growth in our waters clouding the Ponds and harming fisheries.

Excess Bacteria in water from leaky or outdated septic tanks, is harmful to aquatic ecosystems and may make water unsafe for swimming

Toxic Chemicals from gasoline

Executive Board

Bill Abbott (President)	508-224-6629
Ed Russell (Vice-President)	781-646-7464
Peggy Briggs (Secretary)	617-479-6132
Walter Morrison (Treasurer)	508-224-8409
David Buckman, Terry Donoghue, Steve Fairchild, Henry Kunhardt, Jean Loewenberg, Doug Post, Janette Somerville	

and waste oils, improper use and disposal of pesticides and herbicides, leaking oil tanks, toxic cleaners, painting materials, and chemicals in batteries are a danger to humans and wildlife.

Laws may regulate certain work on or near waterfront properties.

Massachusetts has a mixture of state, local and federal laws designed to protect our Ponds. State and town laws require a ConCom site visit to any property where work is proposed within 100 feet (the buffer zone) of a wetland or pond **PRIOR TO ANY WORK** (including tree cutting, soil removal or grading, etc.)

What can you do?

1. Minimize lawn size. Keep the major portion of your property in its existing contours and natural vegetation. Natural landscaping helps preserve Plymouth's rural charm and special character, reduces nitrogen load in our ponds and requires less cost. Avoid nitrogen and water dependant bluegrass. Choose instead mixed species, drought tolerant grasses.

2. Pump septic systems. Reduce water use from the house. Pump every two years to prevent overflow.

3. Preserve existing wetlands. Wetlands are natural pollution buffers and wildlife habitat. Don't fill them in. Create buffer zones of native vegetation along Ponds or streams.

4. Dispose of hazardous materials safely. Never pour oil and hazardous chemicals

on the ground or into your septic system. Take them to the landfill on hazardous waste day.

5. Contact the Conservation Commission. Big projects such as docks, house additions or vegetation and tree removal require detailed review by the ConCom. Smaller projects within the 100-foot buffer, while still requiring a permit, may be permitted. This includes small unpaved pathways for private use; fencing, provided it does not constitute a barrier to wildlife movement; cordwood piles; planting of native species of trees, shrubs and groundcovers but excluding turf lawns; conversion of deck to lawn or lawn to deck; vista pruning –the selective thinning of branches or understory shrubs to establish a "window" to improve visibility. Vista pruning does NOT include the cutting of trees resulting in a reduction of leaf canopy to less than 90% nor the mowing or removal or understory brush.

Help us protect the beauty of the Six Ponds!

Six Ponds Association Membership

If you haven't already, please join or renew. Dues are just \$10 per year.

Mail to:
Six Ponds Improvement Association
P.O. Box 1580
Plymouth, MA 02362

Six Ponds Annual Meeting and End of Summer Social



Six Ponds' traditional AUGUST POT LUCK* SOCIAL is scheduled for SATURDAY, AUGUST 26th at 6:00 P.M. Charlotte & Ed Russell will host the social at their hall at 81 HALFWAY POND ROAD, directly across from Justine Road.

OLD AND NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Please join us and learn more about Six Ponds. We'll provide hot coffee, ice water and desserts. BYOB if you'd like other beverages.

If your last name begins:

A-M bring a main dish
N-Z bring salad.

* Please bring food for at least eight so that no one goes home hungry!

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Plymouth, MA. 02362