

Six Ponds News

(www.sixponds.org) February 2006

An occasional Publication of the Six Ponds Improvement Association

Makepeace update

AD Makepeace officials attended a Six Ponds Executive Committee meeting on February 6 to present an update on their development plans.

Their Phase I is in final approvals now and includes 65 units just North of White Island Pond. Among other reasons Makepeace chose this site is because it is not subject to the MEPA process which has the rest of their project on hold. Makepeace will eventually build 1180 houses on their lands and they are hoping to present an Environmental Impact Report for their entire development to MEPA in June.

Their Phase I project is being done as a test of Plymouth's new Transfer of Development Rights by-law. The houses that are being built in Phase I come from 33 of their developable lots removed from Halfway Pond. This includes over 70% of the potential pond front lots. Of the more than 54 units that Makepeace has rights to build on Halfway Pond more than 50% are being removed in Phase I.

Six Ponds has been working with Makepeace to limit the number of units on Halfway Pond for several years now and is pleased with this first step. Makepeace also announced that they expect to remove their Halfway Pond bogs from cranberry production. These bogs are inefficient from a farming perspective and the nutrient fertilizers used for years on the bogs have degraded Halfway Pond's water quality. Six Ponds asked to be involved in their decommissioning and wetlands restoration plans.

Message to pond front owners

One of the features that makes each of our Six Ponds area so special is the beautiful natural shorefront vistas that one sees when out on the Pond. We are so lucky to have this as many ponds in other areas suffer from very obvious residential development all around their pondfronts.

It does little for the psyche to look up from your sailboat and see looming houses instead of natural treed vistas. Yet, unless we pay attention we will gradually lose this "specialness" of our Ponds. I suggest we should be proactive in trying to preserve the natural shoreline by encouraging the preservation of trees and shrubs right down to the pond's edge.

Before trees are cut, think about the effect in reverse – how will this look from the water? It could well be that just a little careful thinning will be enough to allow one to get a view of the Pond, and yet preserve the shore vistas that are so unique to our Six Ponds.

Wm. Abbott

Is a Catadromous Catastrophy coming??

American Eel are found in many ponds and streams in Plymouth particularly in Halfway, Little Long and Long Ponds. They are a species in trouble with counts diminishing up and down the eastern seacoast. U.S. Fish and Wildlife is considering listing the American eel as either threatened or endangered. Reasons for eel decline are little known but poaching and environmental factors are likely. Poached elvers go for fifty to one hundred dollars a pound.

Where do they come from and are they still coming to Plymouth?

Eels swim up the Agawam River to Halfway Pond and then to Long and Little Long Ponds. Eel have no trouble with the 500 foot stream between Little Long and Long Ponds which flows unimpeded along a 3/4% grade. However, their journey from Halfway to Long is an issue. This 800 foot passage drops 3 to 4 feet and in part flows through a large pipe.

Though eels, more than most other fish, are known to have an ability to swim or "climb" almost straight up a dam face, trouble may arise at the difficult cement weir box in Long Pond and, to a lesser extent, at Makepeace's irrigation weirs alongside Halfway Pond. The question is, have eel been able to get to Long and Little Long since the weir box was built?

Makepeace does however, get good marks for it's Denil design Alaska Steep Pass fish passage ladders in the Agawam particularly at the Stumpy Pond dam.



Eels are catadromous which means they spawn in salt water and live in fresh water, the opposite of anadromous fish like salmon.

American eel live in freshwater streams all the way from Greenland to Brazil and in the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basin. They begin their lives in the mid-Atlantic Sargasso Sea, migrating to freshwater rivers and lakes and coastal areas where they live for 7-30 years. Young eels called elvers grow through an immature yellow to a maturing bronze or silver stages. Eel return to the Sargasso Sea to spawn and die and interestingly they begin the spawning migration at different times depending on location so as to synchronize arrival thousands of miles away at the Sargasso. How they find the Sargasso Sea is not known.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife is seeking Information from anyone that has observed them recently in Plymouth waters. Traditionally eels have been seen under floats and docks in Long and Halfway. Please provide your observations to Ed Russell at 508-224-2007.

Trash Talk

No those weren't inmates from the county prison that you saw cleaning Long Pond and Clark Roads of litter and trash on February 11 they were nine Six Ponds volunteers braving a chilly day to make our neighborhoods look a little better.

Two large pickup trucks were sent to the dump packed with roadside discards. Lots of thanks to Steve Abbott, Bob & Margie Saunders, Ed & Charlotte Russell, Leighton Price, Aileen Chase, Judy Savage from Pinewoods and Jessica Schultz from the Wildlands Trust.

Thanks also to those who stopped to offer their gratitude or offered an encouraging beep as they went by.

Charter Referendum?

At the annual town election on May 13th Plymouth residents will be called upon to vote on whether the town's current charter (the town's basic governing structure) will be reviewed for possible changes. This issue will take the form of two related questions on the same ballot. This initiative was started by HALT members that wish to install a mayoral form of government.

The first question will ask whether there should be a charter review and the second is who would sit on the review committee should such be voted. The committee could take up to two years to present final recommendations which will then be presented for a town wide vote.

Note; it is very important that voters pay particular attention to the charter review questions this year. Even if you vote "No" on the charter review question it is extremely important that you also vote for individual Charter Commission candidates. Since there is no assurance that the charter review question will pass or not pass, one must respond to the second ballot question.

Increased local traffic

The town is currently studying six alternatives to solve its high school space problem.

One of these options is to consolidate all high school students in

one school; the current Plymouth South H.S. site. This could add up to 2100 additional high school students there and would have an enormous adverse impact on our area.

Traffic is already backed up toward the Pine Hills and for a half-mile along Long Pond Road at High School rush hour.

Local residents should call their elected representatives and point out the problems. Plymouth South has poor access along a narrow and winding Long Pond Road.

Most importantly, nothing has been said yet about the traffic load to come from Pinehills (only one-third built out) and Makepeace (which alone will contribute 8000 trips per day through our neighborhood). The confluence of those three factors is a disaster in the making, a "perfect storm" traffic nightmare for Long Pond Road and our area.

Not even multiple traffic lights could solve the problem and there don't appear to be any alternatives to alleviate the coming gridlock. Learn more and get involved.

Watershed Action Alliance (WAA)

The Six Ponds Association sends representatives to monthly meetings of the South Shore watershed umbrella organization called the Watershed Action Alliance.

This group, organized to protect the natural resources of south-eastern Massachusetts, works together to sustain the environment

in the face of regional development projects.

The generous financial support of a local family affords WAA an Executive Director who prepares and organizes responses to proposals that threaten our local aquifer and other natural resources.

Two of the more important issues the Alliance has addressed recently are Makepeace's development plans and protection of the Plymouth-Carver Sole Source Aquifer.

Individual WAA organizations from all over the South Shore came to the support of the Plymouth area by submitting official comments to MEPA on Makepeace's Phase I proposal covering every aspect of the development from water uptake to wastewater disposal and from nutrient enrichment to traffic and endangered species.

The WAA website is: www.watershedaction.org

Cleanup Day

Are you fed up looking at all the trash along our local roads? Six Ponds has organized a cleanup day for Saturday, March 11.

We will meet on Clark Road at Long Pond Road at 11 a.m. on the 11th. Six Ponds will supply the plastic bags, you provide the energy. Pitch in and help by showing up. In case of inclement weather call 508-224-2007 or email edrussel@aol.com.

... from the past.



Circa 1941, Bob and Don Bird, grandchildren of cranberry grower Le Baron R. Barker, rowing on Halfway Pond. The white house on the hill, built originally by Mr. Barker in 1900 and extensively remodeled in 1937, is now used as a retreat and meeting center by the Philosophy Foundation.



Three of Le Baron Barker's 19-foot Duxbury Duck sailboats racing on Halfway Pond in the early 1940s.

Mr. Barker can be seen sailing the boat at the right. Henry Gilbert, long-time Six Ponds resident and cranberry foreman, sails the boat at the left.

The middle boat is sailed by Le Baron Barker, jr. Crews include two of his sons.

