

Halfway Pond News

In September of 2020, the A. D. Makepeace Company (ADM) committed to permanently cease cultivation of the Cornish Bog on the southeast side of Halfway Pond following their fall cranberry harvest. During the late fall of 2020 through the spring of 2021 the company removed most of the irrigation pipes, sprinklers and pumping equipment from this bog.

ADM also removed much of this same equipment from the Shamrock Bog and Southside Bog on the south side of Halfway Pond as well as from the three Home Bog sections west of Halfway Pond.

In the early spring of 2021 ADM blocked the flow of water into Halfway Pond from each of these bogs with substantial amounts of sand. At the Home Bog they removed the outflow pipes altogether and filled these areas with sand.

More recently, ADM removed the irrigation pipe which ran from the Cornish Bog to the open ditch that leads to the irrigation pipe from Long Pond, and it is anticipated that ADM will continue work related to taking these bogs out of service once this year's cranberry harvest has ended.

It has been very encouraging to see that the water in Halfway Pond has been clearer this summer than it has been in many years and that recent water quality testing has confirmed improvement. We are hopeful that, without runoff from the bogs, Halfway Pond will exhibit continued improvement in the future.



Removed Pipes at Halfway Pond

Six Ponds Water Quality

Our ponds are healthy. Many ponds across the Commonwealth had Cyanobacteria blooms during the summer of 2021 and a number were closed to recreational use. Great Herring Pond had its second bloom in as many years. We need to remain vigilant and act when we see any signs of the start of a bloom or any issue that would add nutrients ("bloom fertilizer") to our ponds.

Now that the Halfway Pond bogs (Cornish, Shamrock, Southside, and Home bogs) are out of agricultural production, for the first time in many years, Halfway Pond didn't experience a late summer Cyanobacteria bloom. Since the summer was warm with an abundance of sunlight, it may be that the reduction of nutrients introduced from the bogs played a role. The Water Committee will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Town to do annual testing as part of its EPA-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), as well as our own Six Ponds testing.

During the coming year we will continue to test our ponds and work with Plymouth on the QAPP testing. At the same time we are tracking activity of other pond associations, particularly the Savery Pond Conservancy (www.saverypond.org) and the Herring Ponds Watershed Association (www.theherringpondswatershed.org), both of which have been working with the Town to develop watershed based plans (WBP) for further work toward improvement of their water quality. The Savery Pond WBP was recently published on the Town's webpage (www.plymouth-ma.gov/marine-and-environmental-affairs/news/savery-pond-management-plan-oct-2021).

Bloody Pond - Gallows Pond - Halfway Pond - Little Long Pond - Long Pond - Round Pond

Fall Potluck

More than 30 Six Ponders gathered outside the Wildlands Trust Barn last September for the first in-person Six Ponds event in more than 18 months. It was good to be together! Members enjoyed excellent presentations by Alex Belote, Fire Program Coordinator for the MA DCR, who spoke about the Firewise program, and by Scott Morrison of Morrison's Power Equipment, who spoke about the safe use of power tools. Special thanks to the organizing committee for bringing us all together.

Stay Safe in the Woods - Chain Saw Safety Tips

Keep Scott Morrison's chainsaw safety tips in mind as you continue to clean up from the October Nor'easter.

Select a saw by weight and power, not necessarily by bar length. A longer guide bar puts more weight on the left hand which will tire sooner, causing a weaker grip.

Don't purchase the smallest "top handle" variety, as they are harder to control in a dangerous kickback situation. They are designed for professional arborists.

What causes kickback:

- Improper saw maintenance
- Loose chain tension
- Parts installed incorrectly
- Loose rivets
- Bent or broken chain parts
- Chain saw incorrectly sharpened
- Excessive chain depth settings
- Poor grip on the saw
- Poor footing or unbalanced stance

Dress for safety:

- Chainsaw chaps (easy to put on over pants and work boots)
- Hard hat
- Ear muffs
- Gloves
- Work boots
- Safety glasses

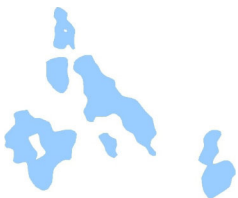
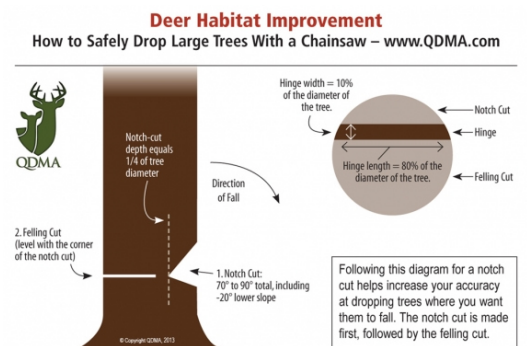


Determining how a tree will fall –Scott's tips:

First assess the tree, the tree canopy and whether there is a clear area for it to fall. Saplings, widow makers (dead branches that are hanging in the tree to be cut or neighboring trees that may be hit when it falls) and vines should be cleared or considered as they can affect the direction of fall and your safety below. Most of all, make sure you have an escape route that is clear before cutting.

Cut a 90 degree wedge on the side of the tree you want it to fall towards. Next you back cut towards the wedge, about 2" above the center of the wedge, creating a hinge that the tree falls on. Both Stihl and Husqvarna have YouTube videos and instructions about cutting down trees.

A common maintenance issue with chain saws is related to regular gasoline, which contains ethanol and which absorbs moisture out of the air, forming a jelly like substance in the carburetor. Morrison's sells ethanol-free fuel that has the required oil mixed in. This pre-mixed fuel helps keep your chain saw running smoothly and lasts for a long period of time. The shelf life of this canned fuel is 2 years from when it is first opened, whereas regular gasoline lasts only 30 - 60 days.



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Fall Clean Up Day

Thanks to the many Six Ponders of all ages who participated in the town-wide litter clean-up day on October 2. As usual, many small liquor bottles (aka nips) were collected. According to Plymouth Public Works Director Jonathan Beder, volunteers across Plymouth picked up approximately 3,500 nips during the clean up event. The greatest number of volunteers came from Six Ponds, Pinehills, and Redbrook neighborhoods. Thank you all!



Great Horned Owls

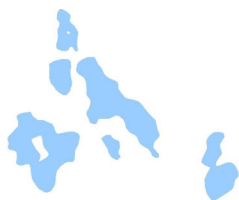
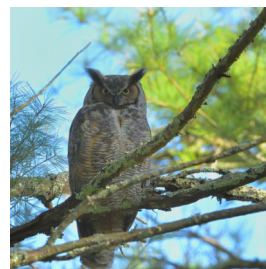
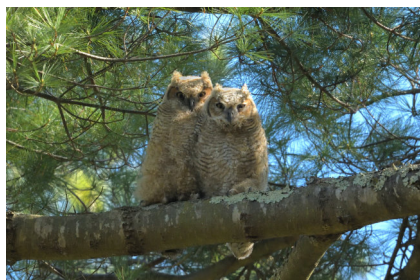
We are fortunate to live in a relatively rural environment here in the Six Ponds area, which we share with some remarkable wildlife, including the Great Horned Owl. These owls live in their breeding territories all year round, and are most vocal in the early winter with their “hoot” calls when mated pairs begin their duets in preparation for nesting. The hooting ends once the first egg is laid, sometime in mid to late February. We are lucky to have at least one pair whose territory is in our area, and we are approaching the time of year people will be able to hear, and maybe see, this magnificent bird.

Great Horned Owls, the largest owl common here, are widely distributed in North America, and are long-lived, powerful and efficient predators. These owls typically hunt at night from a perch using acute hearing and very good vision built around a large binocular field of view. Once prey has been identified, they silently fly and pounce on their target. While mammals make up about 90% of their diet, they do take birds, primarily waterfowl, as well as small numbers of reptiles, amphibians and insects.

Mated pairs are highly territorial, using a variety of vocalizations to defend their nesting area. Great Horned Owls don't build their own nests, but instead utilize abandoned hawk stick nests or occasionally tree cavities, rarely reusing a nesting site. Generally two eggs are laid that are incubated for about five weeks exclusively by the female; her mate does all the hunting and provides food. After hatching, the nestlings grow rapidly, reaching 75% of adult weight after six weeks. At this point they are able to climb around out of the nest and on adjacent branches. At seven weeks, their juvenile plumage has developed sufficiently to support short flights. The young spend the summer on their parent's territory, increasingly feeding on their own, and disperse in the fall.

If you happen to see one of these impressive birds, please observe it from a distance. If the bird's behavior changes (moving up and down, or walking along a branch), quietly move back and do not pursue a bird that has flown further away.

The accompanying photos were taken by Rusty Briggs last winter with a telephoto lens and enlarged. The photographer was at a respectful distance and not surprisingly, the owls were aware of the photographer's presence and watched him long before he noticed them.



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From Precinct 12 to Precinct 16

Every ten years the boundaries of voting precincts are adjusted to reflect new U. S. Census data. The voting precincts in Plymouth have now been extensively redrawn since there have been large population changes over the past ten years due to development and because the congressional voting districts in Plymouth have been modified.

When precinct boundaries were redrawn ten years ago creating 15 precincts, most of the Six Ponds area was included in a very large but sparsely populated precinct which extended from the Carver line on the southwest to Long Pond Road and Route 3 on the northeast. Unfortunately, Bloody Pond was placed in a different precinct at that time.

Following extensive revision of precinct boundaries throughout Plymouth there are now 18 precincts, and most of the Six Ponds area is now in Precinct 16. Our precinct is far more compact west of Route 3 than it was previously, and a large area east of Route 3 and south of Beaver Dam Road is part of this new precinct.

On three separate occasions, Six Ponds board members, current Precinct 12 Town Meeting representatives, and other Six Ponds residents presented reconfiguration proposals to Town officials and a resident working group which was revising the Town precinct map. This was done because one or more of our six ponds kept being deleted from Precinct 16 in different draft redistricting maps.

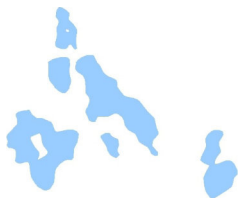
When the Select Board finally approved the official voting precinct map for Plymouth in November, the efforts of those working on this project were rewarded. All six of our ponds are now included in the new Precinct 16. As of this writing, the new voting location for Precinct 16 is Plymouth South Middle School.

Six Ponds is recognized as a Firewise USA community

It's official! The Six Ponds Association has completed the criteria to become a nationally recognized NFPA Firewise USA program participant. The program works with residents throughout the country to reduce wildfire risks in their local communities. Under the guidance of Alex Belote, Forest Fire Coordinator at the MA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation and with the help of the local Plymouth Fire Department, many Six Ponders have had free forest fire preparedness inspections done on their properties. Particular thanks go to Susanne Lucas for setting up Morrison's Power equipment to educate us on the use and care of power equipment and to John Scagliarini of Scag Trees for volunteering time and equipment for tree removal and cleanup for our volunteer day fire cleanup project. These efforts make our community safer and help acquaint our fire department with the needs and layout of our community.

In the coming year, we hope to offer reflective house numbers to ensure that fire and emergency equipment can quickly find our homes and respond in the event of an emergency. We will again offer free risk management inspections, track residential volunteer hours, provide an educational program and set up a community volunteer project in the coming year. Contact Pompey Delafield at pompey43@aol.com for more information, to sign up for an inspection or to join the committee.

For more information visit <https://www.nfpa.org>



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Plymouth Municipal Vulnerability Program - Get Involved

The Municipal Vulnerability Program run by the Southeast Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance (SEMPBA) and the Town Planning Department examines encroachment of saltwater from Cape Cod Bay into the Plymouth-Carver aquifer. There is a balance at a subterranean interface between the aquifer's freshwater and bay's saltwater. As water is withdrawn from the aquifer and precipitation patterns change, the interface can move inland. This results in increased salinity of well water with the first impacts being found in wells immediately along the coast. The project is seeking volunteers to assist with two types of well testing. First, sample collectors are being solicited. This involves going to homes with private wells, collecting water samples from a tap at or very close to the well, using a small test probe to measure the conductivity of the water sample, and returning a sample to the SEMPBA lab. Second, a few volunteers with simple mechanical skills are needed to measure water levels in a number of select wells. This will require some training. Please contact Hampton Watkins (hampton@alum.mit.edu or 617.510.4656) or Frank Mand (dogd@aol.com or 774.454.0856) if you are interested in volunteering for the project. A commitment of two or more days a month through early 2023 would be appreciated. For more information visit <https://resilientma.org/mvp>

Congratulations to our Members

50% of our membership has paid their dues.
If you haven't renewed your membership, please do so!
\$25.00 per household

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Mail your check payable to the Six Ponds Improvement Association to Six Ponds Improvement Association, PO Box 1580, Plymouth, MA 02360. Questions on your membership status? Contact Emily Davis at snowdavis@aol.com or 508-224-2080. She will be happy to help you.

Board of Directors of the Six Ponds Improvement Association

President Hampton Watkins

Vice President Edward Russell

Treasurer Sanford Leslie

Secretary Lois Post

Board members: Al Baum, Caroline Chapin, Emily Davis, Barry Dolan, Sarah Geer, Sherm Geller, Kathy Marks, Leighton Price, Linda Warren.

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SIX PONDS

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