



# FRIENDS OF ELLISVILLE MARSH NEWSLETTER: SPRING IS HERE! MARCH, 2014

*This newsletter is produced on a periodic basis to keep members of the Friends of Ellisville Marsh, Inc. apprised of developments and opportunities to become involved.*

## Winter Storm Spares Inlet; DEP Decision Does Too... For Now

For the first time since 2010, Mother Nature cooperated and the Ellisville inlet stayed put through the winter of 2013-14. Tidal flows into and out of the marsh were unrestricted and money didn't need to be spent to bring in heavy equipment to reopen the inlet. Of course, this was luck-of-the-draw. The previous winter saw four major coastal storms, each with enough raw power to block the inlet. The Friends had to perform inlet maintenance twice last year so we were due for a break!



## Mass DEP Issues Long-awaited Decision Restoring Permit Authority

One misconception the Friends' board had when we pursued all the local, state and federal permits necessary to reopen the long-blocked Ellisville inlet starting in 2008 was that our permitting work (at least the "heavy lifting") would be over when all the permits had been earned. This turned out not to be the case. The Chapter 91 waterways permit issued by the MassDEP contained an unusual condition—after the first three years of inlet maintenance the agency would review the vast trove of environmental monitoring data we had collected (also unusual for restoration projects like ours) and decide whether to let us continue exercising our permit authority. This condition was triggered in March of 2013. The Friends requested in a letter to the DEP that the decision be made in a timely

manner to avoid impacting work this winter. We also asked that the DEP extend our annual window for inlet maintenance to include February and March since late winter storms had been rendering January work ineffective. After extensive delays, the MassDEP finally issued its decision on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In practical terms this precluded us from performing inlet maintenance work during the winter of 2013 even though we held all necessary permits. While we are pleased that the department has restored our authority to maintain the inlet for two more years and laid out a path that should allow maintenance work later in the winter, we were disappointed by a number of details in the decision and plan to follow up with the department accordingly. Details of our concerns are available to any Friends' member; however, they can be summarized as follows:

- The decision puts even greater burdens on the shoulders of our small, nonprofit organization in the areas of data collection, reporting and scientific analysis.
- If the decision stands as currently written, it will shorten the term of our Chapter 91 waterways permit by four years, from 2019 to 2015.
- The process outlined for requesting permission to perform work in February or March introduces uncertainty to our planning for maintenance events.

Stay tuned. We'll keep you informed as our permit situation continues to develop.



photo courtesy of Diane Fletcher, 2014

**Ellisville Beach Spring Clean Up!**  
**Earth Day, Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00 am – noon**  
**come help beautify the beach!**

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**Friends Pursue Grant Opportunities - Possibility for Internship**

Two grant applications are pending that will, if successful, significantly enhance our research activities in 2014. We have applied to Entergy, the owner of Plymouth's Pilgrim Station for funding for our first-ever summer internship for a promising college or university student majoring in environmental studies or similar field. In addition, we were invited to join a team the Town of Plymouth has assembled to pursue grant funding to study water quality in three dozen Plymouth ponds this summer. If this grant is awarded, we'll have the opportunity to build on our prior water quality work at Savery Pond, a key component of the Ellisville estuary. Keep your fingers crossed.



**Close-up of Savery Pond, 2012** photo courtesy of Paula Marcoux

**Endowment Fund Update**

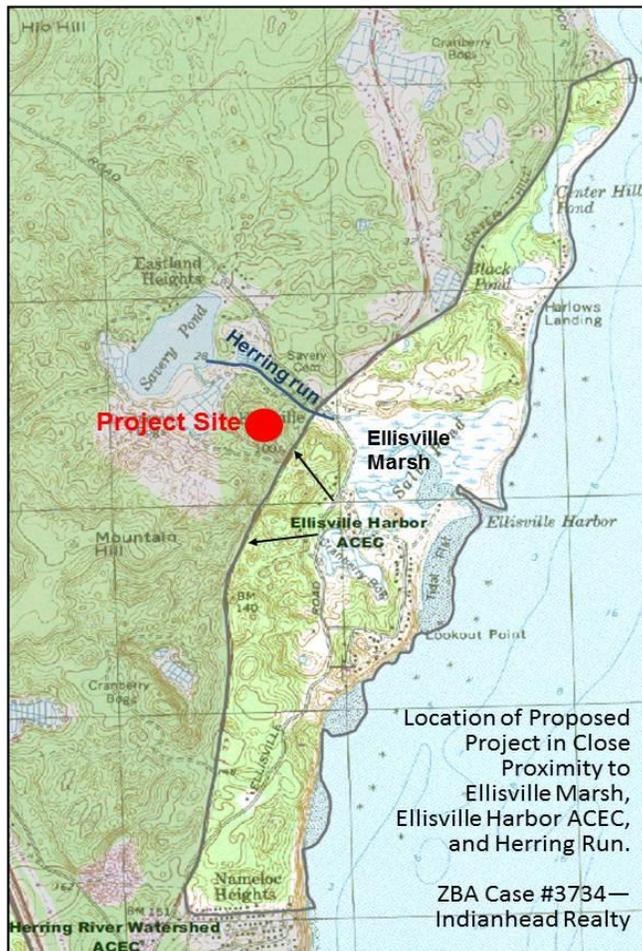
We are pleased to report that contributions to our Endowment fund have now reached **\$56,476**. Our original goal was to reach \$100,000 so we are over halfway there. We still need your help to reach this goal. It's not too late to play a role in insuring the sustainability of our citizen-action project to

restore and preserve Ellisville Marsh! Send us a check or make a donation at [www.EllisvilleMarsh.org](http://www.EllisvilleMarsh.org). Remember, donations to the Friends of Ellisville Marsh are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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## Massive Excavation Project Proposed on Doorstep of Ellisville Marsh

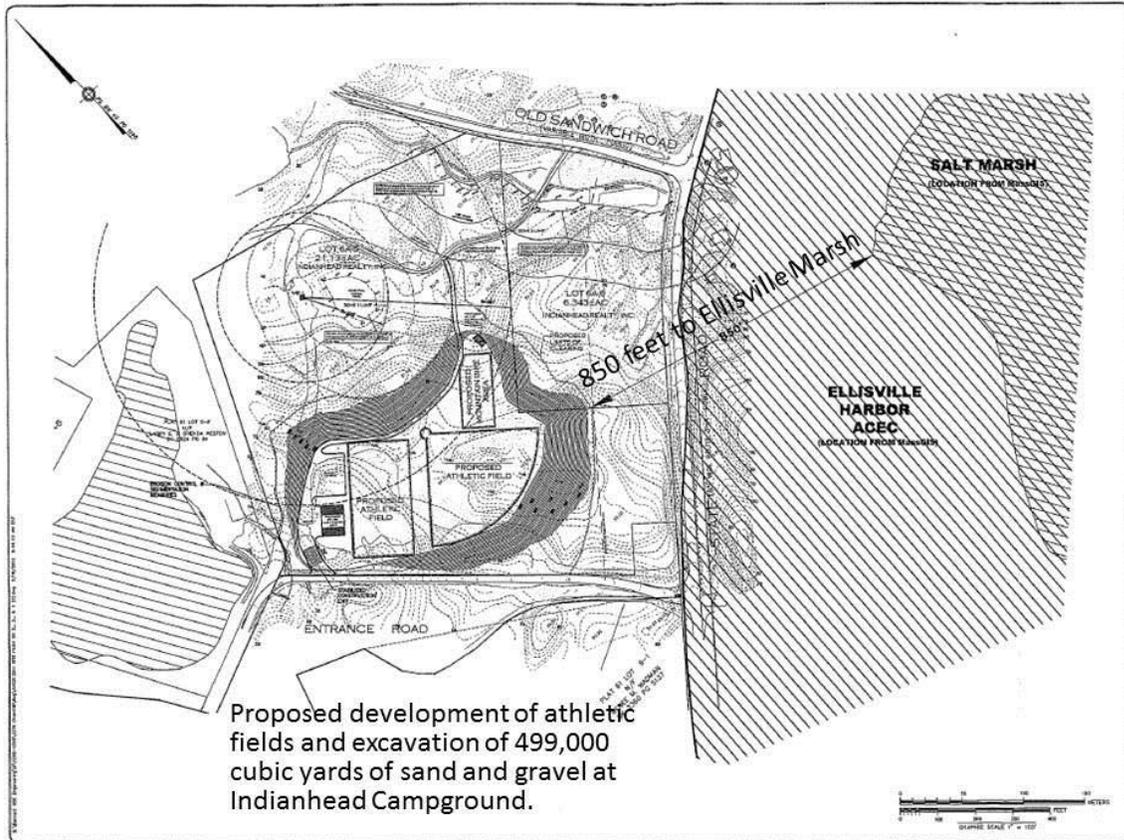
Our ten-member board doesn't always agree on everything, but when it comes to a proposal by Indianhead Realty (aka Richard Churchill) to construct athletic fields and extract nearly 500,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a site that's *within 850 feet of Ellisville Marsh*, we're unanimously and vehemently opposed. Indianhead has applied for special permits from the Plymouth Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to undertake the project, which could have adverse impacts on Ellisville Marsh and the herring run that connects the marsh with Savery Pond, about ½ mile up Old Sandwich Road. The potential threat to the marsh of as many as forty gravel trucks a day pulling out onto State Road also concerns us. They would pass within 500 feet of the marsh.



The location of the Friends' work site when we conduct periodic maintenance of the Ellisville inlet is nearly the same distance from the marsh as this project. Ironically, our nonprofit group, which has no financial self-interest whatsoever in restoring and preserving Ellisville Marsh, is being held to a far higher standard of environmental review and monitoring than this proposed commercial project, simply because the Applicant doesn't need any state permits. Unlike the Friends of Ellisville Marsh, he isn't required to submit an environmental notification form (ENF) under MEPA (the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act). In sharp contrast to his "free ride", the Friends spent more than two years and approximately \$75,000 during regulatory review under MEPA and in subsequent permitting for a project solely pursuing a "public good." Our supporters have contributed an estimated 7,000 hours of unpaid,

volunteer time to this work and we have raised all the necessary funds through private donations and grants. We have received no taxpayer funding. It would be a shame to see years of such unselfish effort by more than 150 residents of our local community compromised by what amounts to a strip mining operation on the very threshold of Ellisville Marsh.

The Friends of Ellisville Marsh have strongly urged the ZBA to deny the special permits the project needs to move forward. We encourage you to express your own concerns about this proposed project to the Plymouth Zoning Board of Appeals and to come to the public hearing that's scheduled for May 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:45 pm at the Town offices on Lincoln Street. More details on the project can be found at a local neighborhood group's web site, [www.StopIndianhead.org](http://www.StopIndianhead.org).



## Snowy Owl Invasion!

You have probably heard about the record numbers of snowy owls that have been spotted up and down the coast this winter. Scientists believe a spectacularly high lemming population in the Arctic allowed snowies to produce a bumper crop of young last season, meaning more young owls spreading farther afield than ever before. Ellisville was among the spots where they were seen, along with other winter bird highlights like snow buntings and the horned lark below.

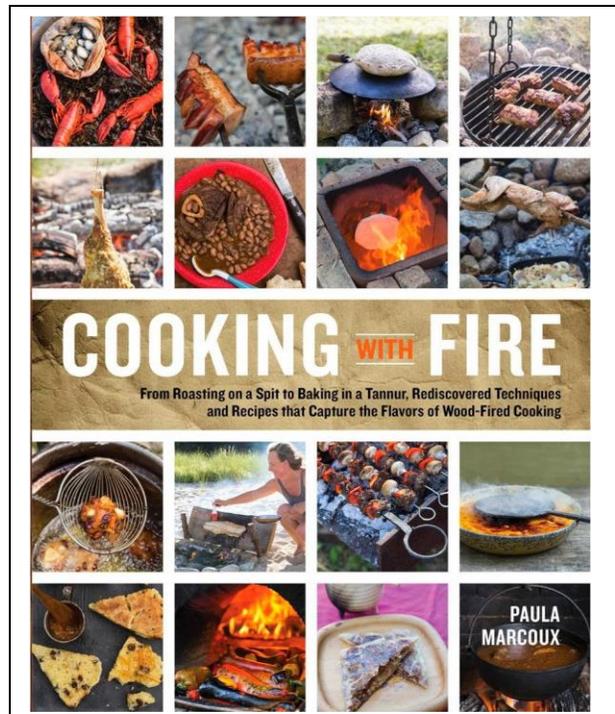


photos courtesy of Diane Fletcher, 2014

## Friends Director 'Cooks with Fire'

Anyone who knows Paula Marcoux, long-time Board of Directors Member, knows that she is a multi-talented archaeologist, food history expert, oven builder, bread baker, birder, writer, conservationist, and involved community member. But you may not have known that she has written a book that melds many of her food-related interests and encourages the reader to attempt everything from Neolithic era oven construction to toasting cheese on a stick, while somehow making all of these pursuits seem equally attainable to someone who is not as talented as she is!

Paula will hold a book signing event at the Plymouth Public Library, May 10th 3:30-8:30 pm.



## Lots of Local Natural History Opportunities Coming Up

### Toes in the Sand, An Eye on the Future: How Public Participation Could Shape Everyone's Rights in the Coastal Zone

Part of the Goldenrod Foundation's lecture series, "Making Waves in Coastal Conservation", the next speaker is Juan Bacigalupi from Mashpee. He is a J.D. candidate at Lewis & Clark Law School and focuses on wildlife law and coastal zone management. He will speak about how sea level rise will change our coastline and what that might mean to people who like to recreate there. Juan will tell you how your input and visible presence in digital and social media now, might affect your rights in the future. **This series will take place on the 4th Wednesday of each month, March through July.**

Wednesday, March 26, 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (doors open at 7 p.m.)

Held at Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance Community Conservation Center at 204 Long Pond Road, Plymouth. To register to attend (space is limited), phone 508-746-0769 or email: [dss@goldenrod.org](mailto:dss@goldenrod.org).

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### Beach Ambassadors Volunteer Public Education Program - Plymouth Long Beach

You can read more details about the Beach Ambassadors here: <http://www.goldenrod.org/blog/2014-beach-ambassador-program-overview>

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### PineFest: a celebration hosted by the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance

Find out more about this festival that celebrates this unique local habitat on May 17th, 10:00 am - 8:00 pm in Myles Standish State Forest [https://www.facebook.com/events/507330496043250/?ref\\_notif\\_type=event\\_mall\\_comment&source=1](https://www.facebook.com/events/507330496043250/?ref_notif_type=event_mall_comment&source=1)

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### New England Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) Corps Training Comes to S.E. Mass.

Native plants are in decline. Volunteers are needed in the Southeast Region of Massachusetts to help identify and monitor local populations of rare and endangered plants.

To encourage volunteers in our region, the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance (SEMPBA) will host the New England Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) Corps Training Seminar on Saturday, April 5, 2014, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Carver Public Library (the location may change depending on the applications received). This special training will focus on native plants that are rare in the S.E. Mass. Region.

The New England Wildflower Society invites you to become a Plant Conservation Volunteer (PCV) and learn how to identify rare native plants for conservation monitoring and the control of invasive species that threaten native flora. Volunteers receive classroom and field training and a comprehensive handbook. All volunteers are eligible to take part in additional special classes, field trips, and symposia. The training is free. Bring a potluck lunch dish to share.

The PCV Corps requires a flexible volunteer commitment as described in the application. You must apply to attend. Please mail your application by March 27 for the April 5 training. The Application form is available at <http://www.newenglandwild.org/docs/pcv-application.pdf>.