



Friends of Ellisville Marsh Newsletter

March, 2016

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.

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Upcoming Events Save the Date!

- **Annual Ellisville Beach & Marsh Clean-up Day**
Saturday, April 23rd at 10:00 am (weather permitting).
- **Ellisville Bird Walk**
Saturday, May 14th at 10:00 am. Shifting Lots Preserve
- **Annual Meeting**
Saturday, July 16th at 10:00 am.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and ready for the recent weather roller coaster to give way to spring! Our organization has experienced a similar ride lately with both good and not-so-good developments. The good news—this month we finally received our new, five-year permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers after many months of bureaucratic delays. The other news—receiving a permit at literally the eleventh hour forced the Friends to defer our planned March inlet maintenance until 2017 (both topics are covered in this newsletter). What these events should convey to you is that our organization is diligent, detail-oriented and persistent, sometimes painfully so. Perhaps most importantly, we do not assume uncalculated risks. This mixed bag of experiences will soon be receding in our rear-view mirror, however. We are shifting into high gear—welcoming Piping Plovers back to Ellisville Beach, establishing a baseline bathymetric survey of the channel, and lining up resources for this summer's ongoing data collection programs. And we have begun discussions with the Town of Plymouth to find a long-term, sustainable approach to maintaining tidal exchange in Ellisville Marsh. If we are successful, this will hopefully eliminate the need for continuous regulatory oversight and periodic maintenance. Stay tuned.

Jack Scambos, President

Friends Win New, Five-Year Federal Permit

The Friends' initial five-year permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers expired in January 2015. We had grandfathering that allowed us to perform inlet maintenance last March. In May we submitted an application, 99 pages in length, for a new permit (available in PDF format to any Friends member who has trouble falling asleep!). This time, we did not use an outside consultant but relied solely on our internal expertise, saving several thousand dollars in the process. The application process dragged on throughout 2015 and our application was finally posted for review by other federal agencies in November. Thanks to the determined efforts of Friends' president Jack Scambos, we were able to head off several onerous, new conditions that were not in our first permit. We finally received our new permit March 9th, just three days before our contractor was to have moved his equipment onto the site. Sadly, our experience is that regulatory permitting has not become easier in spite of the fact that our project has now been underway for more than five years.

Friends' Leadership Elects to Defer Needed Inlet Maintenance

The Ellisville Inlet, Nature's lifeline for a healthy coastal marsh, was partially blocked by the blizzard that hit eastern Massachusetts on February 8th. Thankfully, we had not performed work in January, as we used to under our old operating model, or that investment would have been wiped out. A new barrier spit was formed during the storm as a massive volume of sand that had been stockpiled on the north side of the state park rock jetty was washed over by eight-foot waves from the northeast. The photo shows the channel diversion that resulted.



The Ellisville Inlet, two days after the blizzard of 2016.

The dark shadow shows the diversion of the channel by the new barrier spit.

Once formed, the barrier spit tends to grow in height and length, adding to tidal flow restriction that threatens native marsh vegetation and water quality.

Under these circumstances, the Friends' board ordinarily acts to restore efficient tidal flows under our local, state and federal regulatory permits. However, given the 11th hour awarding of our new federal permit, which contained several new conditions and language affecting existing conditions, Friends' leadership decided to avoid any risk of possible non-compliance and deferred the planned maintenance event. Our arrangement with Brian Richmond, our trusted maintenance contractor, was canceled without penalty. This effectively closed the door on inlet work in 2016 since our maintenance window is September 15th through March 31st (the window specified in our permits is through January 31st but we request a Time-of-Year waiver several months in advance to enable work later in the season when major storms are less likely to introduce setbacks).

Savery Pond Update

The Friends are pressing forward with efforts to understand the causes of Savery Pond's recurrent algal blooms. We are planning for an intensive data collection effort over a single growing season. While we had initially hoped to start this year, we still have several more "ducks" to put in a row before we can pursue grants. We are now targeting 2017 for intensive sampling.

Our regular monitoring, in cooperation with the Plymouth Pond and Lakes Stewardship (PPALS) Program, continues. Pond residents and visitors will likely see us out in our canoes, collecting data on temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH and turbidity, and obtaining samples for lab

analysis. Interested in getting out on the water and helping? Email Friends board member Peter Schwartzman using Savery@EllisvilleMarsh.org to find out about volunteering.

We will also be continuing to:

- 1) Educate concerned and interested individuals regarding pond ecology, conditions and nutrient-related issues;
- 2) Keep residents apprised of toxic algal blooms (should they occur) and provide a means for residents to report algal activity or other conditions of concern/interest;
- 3) Coordinate with researchers, town and regional agencies and other watershed groups working to address nutrient issues on nearby lakes and ponds; and
- 4) Finalize the intensive “Nutrient Impact Monitoring Plan” so it can be used as a basis to obtain grant funding for the 2017 season.

Last summer, the MA Dept. of Health and Human Services issued a cyanobacteria (toxic blue-green algae) advisory for several weeks, shorter than for recent years. Sampling revealed anoxic (that is, oxygen devoid) conditions near the bottom, which may account for the release of absorbed nutrients (phosphorus) from the sediments, triggering the bloom.

If you would like to find out more about nutrients in Savery Pond, best management practices for pond residents and what **you** can do to help, please visit our web page at <http://tinyurl.com/Savery-Pond>.



They're Back!

Friends' board members Brad Winn and Paula Marcoux had exciting news to report in mid-March—our first sightings of Piping Plovers in 2016! Three were spotted on Ellisville Beach by Brad on March 22nd and more the following day by Paula. This is one of the earliest sightings of these migrating shorebirds here. More evidence of climate change perhaps?

From left: Marie Pelletier, board member Diane Fletcher, Pret Woodburn and Brad Winn. Photo courtesy of Paula Marcoux.

Could It Be Muttonchops?

Friends board member Brad Winn captured this stunning photo of a Piping Plover on Ellisville Beach last week. Could it be Muttonchops, the diligent parent who shepherded his three chicks around the beach for four weeks last summer until they fledged? The distinctive neck band suggests the possibility.



Welcome Spring! Ellisville Bird Walk

Saturday, May 14th
10:00 am
Shifting Lots Preserve

2016 Annual Meeting Save the Date

Saturday, July 16th
10:00 am
Cedarville Fire Station
Community Room

Have You Renewed Your Membership?

We are now more than halfway through our 2015-16 membership year, which began on July 1st. Did you forget to renew your membership? If so, please take a few minutes and renew your commitment to saving the unique resource known as Ellisville Marsh. It's really easy—visit us at:

<http://tinyurl.com/Donate-to-Ellisville-Marsh>