



Friends of Ellisville Marsh Newsletter

Spring 2018

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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Lions of Winter—Bomb Cyclones, Blizzards, Nor'easters

Names to remember: Grayson, Riley, Quinn, Skylar. Massive winter storms exploded hundreds of miles offshore and pummeled the Massachusetts coastline, producing historic flooding and coastal erosion as many as five times between January 1st and today. Sea water that flooded in with super-high tides became trapped and unable to ebb due to storm surge and wind-driven surf. The storms repeatedly overwhelmed the state park rock jetty and carried large volumes of pent-up sand into the Ellisville inlet, spawning a new barrier spit and diverting the flow. Coastal bluffs were battered up and down the Gulf of Maine. For this year at least, March became the new January.

Mid-March View Showing New Barrier Spit and Inlet Diversion



Inlet Maintenance - Decision Time

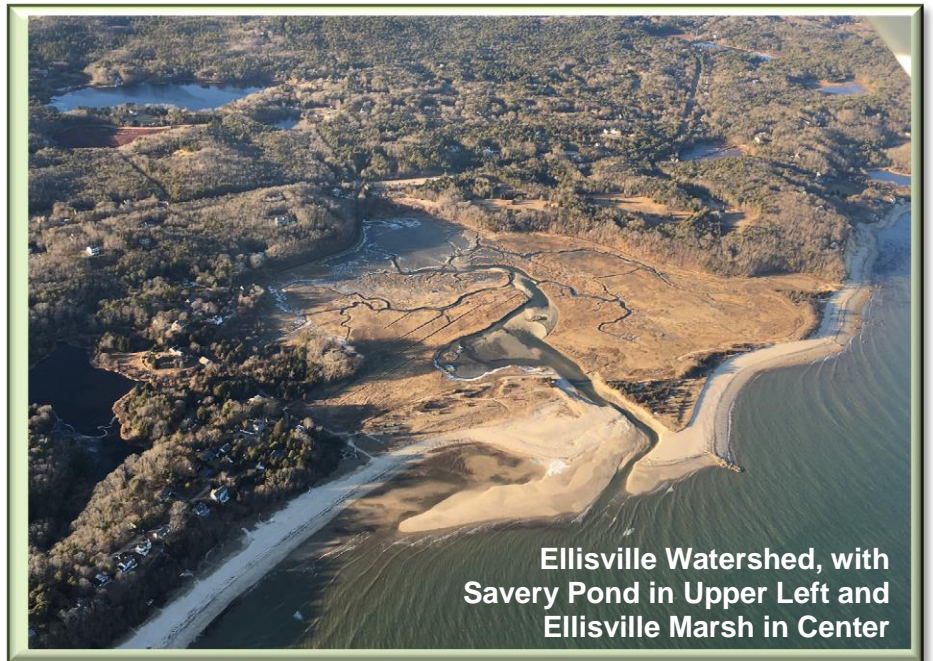
Every year in mid-February the Friends' board of directors must decide whether to conduct inlet maintenance. The main question is: *Have winter storms formed a barrier spit long and high enough that flows into and out of the marsh are restricted?* In cycles when maintenance is needed to remove tidal flow restriction, the contractor must be retained, regulatory agencies notified, survey stakes placed, and supervisory schedules created. The process begins in December and follows a detailed, three-page checklist. Each maintenance event costs several thousand dollars. In short, this is one of the most significant decisions taken by the board each year. This year, the blizzard of 2018 hit the coastline with a massive wallop in early January. Thousands of cubic yards of sand were washed over the rock jetty on the state park side of the inlet during what amounted to a 17-foot high tide. It seemed inevitable that this would trigger maintenance work in March. Our requested waiver of the time-of-year restriction, which was granted by the MassDEP in December, allowed us to schedule the work until March 31st rather than January 31st.



However, careful analysis of the barrier spit in mid-February and its likely impact on the marsh ecosystem led the board to defer maintenance until next winter. Ellen Russell, the board's most experienced scientific resource, observed, "The height of the berm appears less than I remember it in the past and does not seem as likely to cause blockage. The curve the channel is taking is par for the course and also does not seem to be threatening down coast." Mother Nature however did not cast her vote until several weeks later, too late for us to take all necessary steps to enable the work in March. It's very likely inlet maintenance will be required in early 2019.

Savery Pond Prepares for Active Summer Ahead

The Savery Pond Project team has been working hard to launch the next phase in our program to assemble a complete picture of factors contributing to poor water quality and toxic algae outbreaks, as well as their dynamic interactions. While we await the outcome of the Town's grant application for multi-year funds to analyze Savery and several other Plymouth ponds, we are wasting no time in creating scientific research programs in key areas right now (see insert).



Ellisville Watershed, with Savery Pond in Upper Left and Ellisville Marsh in Center

We have also obtained the Town's permission to install three drive-point wells in the adjacent, east bog for sampling purposes, and plan to survey select domestic wells and map groundwater flow directions to better understand interactions between the pond and local groundwater.

Summer 2018 plans for research at Savery Pond currently include:

- Completing the comprehensive plant survey begun last year with assistance from well-known plant ecologist Irina Kadis.
- Monitoring pond discharge / stream flow using our newly acquired SonTek Flow Tracker.
- Sampling water quality associated with pond discharge monitoring.
- Monitoring the water column for temperature, dissolved oxygen, transparency/turbidity, and pH/hardness, and taking periodic "grab" samples.

Thanks to the generosity of project supporters, the 2017 Savery Pond Initiative has raised \$8,800, which provides the critical funding necessary to maintain forward progress with specific critical-path research tasks. While we had originally intended to sample pond sediments this coming spring, considerations regarding the Town's pursuit of grant funding and a new (2019) funding opportunity dictate that we can make more overall progress by performing the sediment analysis in 2019. We anticipate collection of all critical data required for pond management planning by the end of the 2019 sampling season. A more detailed look at this summer's work plan will be distributed in April so stay tuned!



HOLD THESE DATES!

Annual Spring Clean-up

will be on Saturday, April 21st at 10 am. Meetup location is the parking lot at Shifting Lots Preserve. Light rain or shine. Coffee and donuts.

Welcome Spring! Bird Walk

will take place on Saturday, May 5th at 8 am. Meetup is the parking lot at Ellisville Harbor State Park. The walk will be led by Evan Dalton and Brian Harrington of the Manomet Center.

Detailed information & how to register in early April!

If you haven't renewed your membership since July, it's not too late. It's tax-deductible.

Visit EllisvilleMarsh.org and click on the "Donate" tab.

A Cherished Way of Life in an Unforgettable Place

Every now and then, we are handed a reminder of why the Friends work tirelessly to restore and protect the fisheries and wildlife in Ellisville Marsh. The quiet, winter scene pictured here is one such reminder. It comes to us from Friends' member Betsy Puckett, whose family has lived in Ellisville for generations. In Betsy's words: *"This was taken around 1960 during a very high tide as there was a road between the fish houses and the high tide mark that is covered with water in the photo. My dad, Walter Pleadwell, was friends with the lobsterman Bob Glass and both my sister Susan Pleadwell (also a Friends member) and I went out with Bob as he pulled his pots. To go out on the boat you had to work, which meant pegging lobsters, a frightful job for a 10 or 11-year-old. And what an incredible memory and experience it was."* Longtime Friends member and advisor Al Marsh comments, *"Bob Glass was my stepbrother. The fish house on the right belonged to Joe Morse, Jr. and the one on the left belonged to my father, Percy Marsh, later shared with Bob Glass. I built a small addition in 1957 after I left the Navy. The picture*

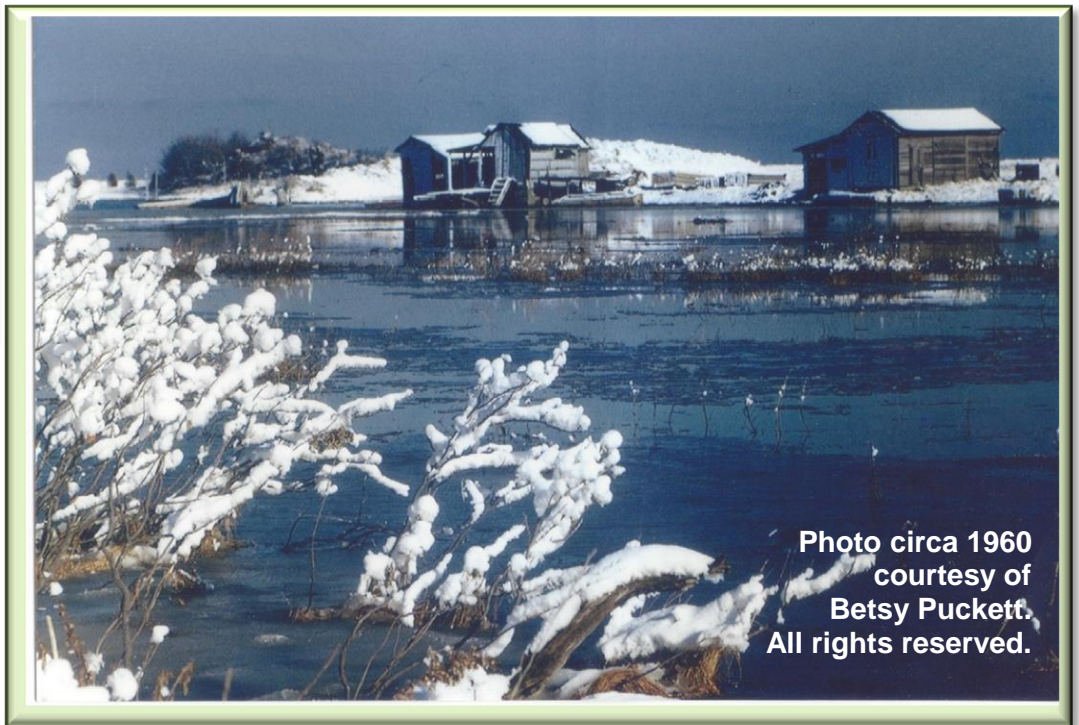


Photo circa 1960 courtesy of Betsy Puckett. All rights reserved.

was taken after that as you can see the addition. They were older than me but we always had good times together, mostly at the harbor." For so many who have called this place home, fishing as a way of life defined Ellisville harbor and made it the center of a community that respected nature and well understood how to co-exist with it. We are still taking lessons from them.



Continuing Saga of Clam Dredging Near the Ellisville Eel Grass Bed

On March 5th Friend's board member Paula Marcoux presented comments before Mass Fisheries at a public hearing on proposed rules for clam dredging off Ellisville. Our position is that this type of fishing is destructive to the near-shore marine ecosystem and directly threatens the health of the Ellisville eel grass bed, a protected resource we closely monitor as a requirement of our regulatory permits. Excerpts from a 2016 article on Clam Dredging by Peter Shelley of the Conservation Law Foundation capture the essential nature of this type of fishing:

"Highly pressurized water is blasted from the ship and downward from the front end of each dredge to "liquefy" and suspend the sediments in front of it, dislodging clams – and whatever else is embedded in the sediments – and catching them in the body of the dredge for retrieval back onto the ship. ...this gear is *not* benign. The dredges are designed to totally disrupt the sea floor and anything near it. Local divers have documented the persistent trenches and instability that clam dredges have created off the Cape, cutting through ecologically critical eel grass beds and leaving a path of destruction."

We will continue to fight for a year-round ban of clam dredging near Ellisville's sensitive natural resources and to bring attention to violations of existing regulations, such as fishing after dark.

Your feedback is always welcome!

The board of directors values feedback and input from members. In fact, some of the organization's best ideas have come from informal conversations and email exchanges with you. You can reach us at any time on email at board@EllisvilleMarsh.org

Questions about anything in this newsletter are also welcomed.

We look forward to hearing from you!