



# Adapting to Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

Spring 2024 Update

The Friends of Ellisville Marsh have entered a new phase in our nearly seventeen-year life as a nonprofit. Our mission — revitalization of fisheries and wildlife in the salt marsh and its surroundings — remains our central focus. However, climate-driven changes we're witnessing firsthand compel us to take what we have learned and apply it to an emerging set of challenges. Our work now includes working with other organizations and agencies to improve coastal resilience in the face of rising sea level and more powerful storms, using innovative approaches to protect vital wildlife habitat and natural resources, and convincing others to follow our lead. You will find these themes throughout this update. We urge you to continue the fight with us at this critical moment. We could not do this without your support.

## Upcoming Events - Hold the Dates

(detailed information to follow)

- **Rescuing Ellisville Marsh: Author Talk and Book Signing** -- May 16 @ 6 pm at Book Love, Pinehills Village Green.
- **Spring Clean-up** -- Saturday, May 18 @ 11 am.
- **Welcome Spring! Bird Walk** -- May 25 @ 9 am.
- **Friends' Annual Meeting** -- Saturday, July 13 @ 11 am.



Piping Plovers have returned to Ellisville Beach! Photo courtesy of Lisa Schibley, Manomet's North American coordinator for the International Shorebird Survey.

### **New Initiative: Massachusetts ResilientCoasts Plan**

Several members of the Friends board participated in the kickoff meeting of the state's ResilientCoasts initiative in late January. The Plan under development is intended to “guide policy and management actions to improve health and safety, protect and enhance natural and cultural resources, prepare our infrastructure for climate change, strengthen our coastal economy, advance equity and environmental justice, and support the capacity of coastal communities.” Following the meeting, we submitted comments to the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs urging them to:

- Consider the special environmental value associated with coastal marshes in offsetting climate change impacts.
- Include “habitat restoration” in benchmark goals.
- Streamline regulatory permitting for projects whose goals are climate-driven as opposed to commercial in nature.
- Encourage “nature-based” approaches such as “living shorelines” over those relying on hardened coastal structures.
- Carefully consider the possible impacts on ecosystems associated with development of the “blue economy,” e.g., aquaculture and other forms of marine harvesting.

Our full comments are available on request. Email us at: [Info@EllisvilleMarsh.org](mailto:Info@EllisvilleMarsh.org).



Ellisville Marsh Inlet in January. Photo courtesy of Mike Brennan

### **Friends' Board Defers Inlet Maintenance in 2024**

The Ellisville Marsh inlet has been behaving itself for several years now. As the photo above shows, no blocking spit had re-formed as of January allowing the tides to flow freely in and out of the salt marsh. With this in mind, the Friends' board decided in mid-February not to proceed with inlet maintenance this winter. It was a good thing since we were still waiting for a waiver of the time-of-year restriction that would have enabled work to be performed as late as March 31st (without the waiver, work must be completed in January). A change in the rules by the US Army Corps of Engineers meant that the MassDEP could no longer unilaterally grant this waiver, as they have for a number of years. We hope to have a clear roadmap for requesting the waiver in the new permits we expect to be issued later this year or in early 2025. Yet another case of “stay tuned.”

**How much do you know about salt marshes? Take the quiz [HERE](#).**

## Re-permitting Process Underway

The project to obtain all new local, state, and federal permits that will allow continuing maintenance of the Ellisville Marsh inlet is underway. The Town of Plymouth, which will become a co-permit holder with the Friends, has retained Sustainable Coastal Solutions, Inc., of North Falmouth to prepare the various applications. An updated Existing Conditions Survey Plan and Proposed Site Plan for permitting purposes have been completed and the firm's principal consultant, Trey Ruthven, has been in informal discussions with regulatory agencies to determine what will be required. One goal is permits that last as long as ten years.



1985 Photo of Ellisville Inlet. Photo courtesy of Jack Scambos.

## Human History of Wildlands: Shifting Lots Preserve

The Wildlands Trust, our closest partner in the ongoing revitalization of Ellisville Marsh, has produced a fine historical piece entitled, “A Brief History of Shifting Lots and Ellisville Harbor.” Written by Wildlands Trust volunteer Skip Stuck, the retrospective covers four hundred years of life at this special place. To read it in its entirety, go to:

[Wildlands Trust — Human History of Wildlands: Shifting Lots Preserve.](#)

## Ed Reiner Wins Top US EPA Wetlands Award

Ed Reiner is a senior wetlands scientist who has provided the Friends with valuable insights into the natural conditions at Ellisville Marsh and the influence the marsh inlet has on the ecosystem for more than a decade. We are pleased to report that Ed was awarded the 2023 Edward T. "Red" Heinen Wetlands Award by the US Environmental Protection Agency. We send our heartiest congratulations to Ed for achieving this singular honor in his field. For details, see:

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ed-reiner-a0364773\\_extracted-from-a-recent-epa-internal-publication-activity-7081579271214755840-NGA2/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/ed-reiner-a0364773_extracted-from-a-recent-epa-internal-publication-activity-7081579271214755840-NGA2/)

## Minimizing Risks to Offshore Eelgrass: Surf Clam Dredging

As readers may recall from past updates, surf clams are harvested off Ellisville Beach by hydraulic dredgers, fishing vessels that use a jet of high-pressure water to blast a trench in the bottom then scoop up the surf clams thrown into the water column. We've repeatedly expressed concern to state agencies that this practice could damage the eelgrass bed, not to mention scar the seafloor and disrupt the marine ecosystem. Friends' president Eric Cody recently spoke with Dan McKiernan, Director of the MA Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), about our concerns with surf clam dredging in Ellisville. He was sympathetic and understands the threat posed to the eelgrass by these vessels.

Key ideas that came out during the conversation:

- Current surf clam dredging regs (1982) are inadequate and imprecise. DMF is considering re-crafting the regs with "hard lines" in place of depth contours. This will help us to identify and report instances of encroachment by vessels.
- The agency plans to offer cellular-based, GPS trackers to surf clam draggers under a pilot program to continuously locate them. Eventually, carrying these devices would become mandatory as they are on federally licensed offshore fishing vessels (required as of May 2023).
- DMF is particularly interested in the "footprints" of dredgers around ecologically sensitive resources such as the Ellisville eelgrass bed. GPS trackers would issue an alert when a vessel is encroaching into a sensitive area.

While banning the practice of hydraulic dredging is unlikely, steps

planned by DMF should reduce the risks to near-shore, natural resources and marine life we care about.

### **Leave that Tree!**

We often hear chain saws buzzing in the Ellisville area as residents clear their property for sunlight or views. Trees provide shade and eliminate heat islands as the climate warms due to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. They absorb carbon dioxide, a potent greenhouse gas and store it in their biomass (as much as 48 pounds per year for a mature tree). And they provide habitat for all sorts of wildlife. They also reduce the need for outdoor watering in summer at a time when water supplies are becoming strained. Our advice to all who will listen is: *think twice before removing a tree!*



Owl with rodent. Photo courtesy of Jenny Zhao / Mass Audubon.

### **Mass Audubon's Rescue Raptors Kick-off Meeting**

The world hasn't learned much since 1962 when Rachel Carson first

exposed the dangers to wildlife of DDT in her groundbreaking book, *Silent Spring*. Now there's a new threat — second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs). Rat poison. SGARs are a class of poisons that prevent blood from clotting, causing internal bleeding, organ failure, paralysis, and often death. Birds of prey capture and eat poisoned rodents and absorb toxins, with devastating effects. SAGRs have been banned for retail purchase but are still being used commercially in many areas with rodent problems. Please consider attending Mass Audubon's kickoff meeting on April 10th. Details can be found at: [Rescue Plymouth Wildlife Kick-off Meeting \(constantcontactpages.com\)](https://constantcontactpages.com).

### **In Memoriam**

It is with sadness that we report the passing of longtime member and supporter Laura Marsh, who died on March 1 at the age of 92. Laura and her late husband Albert gifted land they loved to the Wildlands Trust in 2003 to help create Shifting Lots Preserve. The fact that Ellisville Marsh in its entirety is protected from development is part of their legacy. We send our sincere condolences to the Marsh family.

### **Frank Doyle to Step Down in July**

Longtime Treasurer Frank Doyle has decided to retire from the Friends board when his current term expires in July. Frank has been a member of the board for fourteen years. We will miss his financial acumen and his dry sense of humor.

Haven't renewed your membership for 2023-24? [CLICK HERE](#)