

Friends of Sengekontacket, Inc.
Board of Directors
President's Annual Report
September 2007

2006-07 was an active year for Friends of Sengekontacket, Inc. (FOS) which is reflected, in part, in this report.

In June 2007 Sengekontacket Pond (the Pond) was closed to shellfishing because of high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. The State Fisheries Manager's report stated that in the future the Pond will remain closed to shellfishing for four months from June through September until the bacteria count returns to a safe level for shellfish consumption. The achievement of a healthy Pond will require a coordinated effort by the land users in the watershed, the County, the Towns of Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, their Conservation Commissions, Boards of Health and Planning, together with the various State agencies. FOS will continue to be pro-active in support of this effort.

This year we welcomed Doug Jones and Jan Riley as new members of our Board, whose backgrounds, experiences and enthusiasm will enhance the work of FOS.

As in the past we collaborated with representatives of the Towns of Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, Dukes County, the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC), and many Massachusetts State agencies in the serious pursuit of our mission to help protect and preserve a healthy Sengekontacket Pond its barrier beach and Trapp's Pond.

Barrier Beach Task Force (BBTF) - during the past year the County entered into a professional services agreement with Woods Hole Group, Inc. (Contractor) to assist in developing a beach management plan for Joseph A. Sylvia State Beach. The BBTF believes the structural integrity of the beach is a priority and recommended the Contractor evaluate the following issues which are part of the agreement, to wit:

- Beach erosion and sand replenishment,
- Criteria for implementation of beach replenishment,
- Standards for quality of beach nourishment material,
- Identification of acceptable sources of beach nourishment material,
- Identification of methods to minimize beach erosion,
- Development of emergency response plans for the beach and roadway.

The Contractor will identify important beach management activities that could be undertaken to promote the structural integrity of the beach. These activities will include vegetation, pedestrian access, parking control, beach nourishment, fencing, etc. The contractor will develop threshold criteria for when beach nourishment should be undertaken.

The Contractor will develop an emergency response plan for restoration of the State Beach and roadway following damage caused by a major coastal storm.

The Contractor will determine the required environmental permits for the foregoing beach management activities. Existing permits for work on the beach will be reviewed for status and work allowed, and recommendations will be provided on steps necessary for future permitting.

2007 FOS President's Annual Report

Notwithstanding the continued efforts of FOS, sufficient protective fencing and roping of the beach was not installed for another year resulting in continued damage to substantial portions of beach grass and back dunes as well as the enlargement of new paths; all of which has a detrimental impact on the beach. As you know beach grass anchors and stabilizes the dunes. If the dunes are destroyed or breached Beach Road and the pond-side beach will be jeopardized. This failure resulted, in part, from lack of County funds. However I am pleased to report that the County Engineer Steve Berlucchi and Sheriff Michael McCormack were very helpful in providing the time and attention required to achieve some additional protection.

Water testing - In our efforts to protect water quality in the Pond and to preserve habitat for aquatic plants and animals, shellfish, birds and mammals we continued and expanded our water testing programs.

We continue to support and finance ground water testing in Ocean Heights and Pond water testing on a regular basis. We strongly support the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP). The MEP report is expected to disclose the sources and the amount of nutrient loading in the Pond and will make recommendations for returning the Pond to the water quality conditions that support sensitive shellfish habitat and lush eelgrass beds.

New England Grassroots Foundation (NEGF) Grant Application – Ed O'Melia and Kate Hancock prepared, reviewed with the Board, and submitted a grant application to NEGF for \$2500 for three sets of water testing at nine sights in Sengekontacket Pond. The results will focus on specific DNA testing which will determine the nature (human or animal) of the pollution and hopefully identify the exact specie or species responsible, which will aid local and State agencies in developing a long range strategic plan for the restoration of the Pond. These additional tests are sought to continue and supplement the MEP tests.

Edgartown Board of Health regulations – In March the Edgartown Board of Health adopted new health regulations aimed at reducing ground water contamination and water quality impact on the Pond from Ocean Heights and Arbutus Park. The regulations apply to all new developments and overtime will require modifications to existing homes on substandard lots.

We had recommended to the Board of Health a policy of zero tolerance for any increase of nitrogen and nutrients in the Pond from either wastewater or fertilizers.

Open Meeting for the Community to Discuss the Concept of a Unified Stormwater Management Regulation – On February 14, 2007 FOS, under the leadership of Susan Shea and Terry Appenzellar, organized an open meeting with our Board to consider a unified stormwater management regulation to protect the water quality of the Pond and other Edgartown water resources. Approximately 45 people attended including representatives from: the Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Board of Health, Wastewater Commission, MV Commission, MV Water Alliance, Vineyard Conservation Society, the Shellfish Constables from Edgartown and Oak Bluffs, as well as several residents and the press.

Jo-Ann Taylor, Coastal Planner of the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC), presented an overview of the Pond and its watershed characteristics. Jo-Ann advised that the nitrogen present in the Pond / groundwater is human, avian, animal, and bacteria generated; the bulk is from septic systems and acid

2007 FOS President's Annual Report

rain, with some from fertilizer and storm run-off. She observed that currently there is a hodge-podge of wells, town water and septic systems in the Ocean Heights/Arbutus Park area. The "new" Title V septic systems although designed to effectively remove bacteria, are not effective in removing nitrogen. Jo-Ann further reported that the nitrogen loaded water leaves the Pond fairly quickly but microscopic plants (algae) harvest a substantial part of the nitrogen before it leaves. In a healthy natural system lack of nitrogen limits the algae but too much nitrogen has produced 12 to 16 inch mats of algae that kill eelgrass and shellfish, produce a disagreeable odor and float to shore – particularly on the Oak Bluffs side of the Pond. Consequently the Pond is on the verge of losing its "healthy pond" status. A fascinating general discussion followed with many excellent observations and suggestions.

Fortunately a detailed record of the proceedings was made and should be developed for republication in the future. This would be an excellent project for one of our members this winter, in the form of an FOS white paper which could be distributed to keep this very important issue before the public.

Educational Programs – We continued and expanded our educational programs to increase public awareness and knowledge about the Pond, the barrier beach and the watershed.

Proposed Public Educational Program for the Protection of Beach Grass – Kate Hancock and Jerry McCarthy prepared and submitted to the Board a questionnaire and solicited their comments to assist in the planning of an educational program. They, together with Christina Miller, applied for and received a \$1500 grant from the Edey Foundation. The funds will be used for the research and writing of the text and the printing of 3,000 color handouts for use at the beach, towns, schools and other venues.

The Edey Foundation – has been very supportive of our work, our mission and our programs. The Foundation has made it possible, in part, for us to bring our message to the public and we are grateful.

Carry In / Carry Out - Debby Lewis organized the annual student poster contest to encourage beach users to carry out the trash they carried in. She worked closely with the Edgartown and Oak Bluffs schools. Judging of the posters was held on June 1st and awards were presented to the students by Kate Hancock and Debby Lewis on June 15th. 46 posters were selected, laminated and placed on our sign posts and installed by Mac Reed, Ed O'Melia, Max McCreery and Hap Hamel. These posters greet beach users at every path over the dunes. Additional posters are displayed on the Steamship Authority ferry boats.

Science Fair - FOS is a sponsor of the Science Fair at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School. We recruit judges to select the winner of the FOS award for the outstanding student project relating to water quality and/or salt marsh ecology. FOS donated \$500 to be split between student awards and support for the Fair. This year's FOS Award winner was Rachel Schubert whose project was on the impact of fluoridated water on plant growth.

Beach Clean Up - On April 21st Mac Reed helped out at State Beach while Max McCreery and Susan Shea cleaned up the Landing at Ocean Heights.

Oar and Paddle – Notwithstanding the miscommunication between the YMCA, the Oar and Paddle Society and FOS, Mac Reed, Ed O'Melia, Doug Jones, Chris Miller and Hap Hamel assisted in the event, manned Ed's boat for safety monitoring, and acted as spotters during the race. It was a beautiful day and the FOS banner was displayed along with the YMCA's. I think next year FOS should meet early on with the constituent members to identify our roles and expectations and to plan accordingly. FOS is proud to report that John Caldwell, our webmaster, acquitted himself very well in completing the course. Terry would have been very proud of his performance.

2007 FOS President's Annual Report

Beach Grass planting – On March 24th under the leadership of Debby Lewis and Jerry McCarthy FOS advertised and organized the planting of 20,000 culms of beach grass on State Beach with the help of several FOS Directors and many community members including Dave Grunden, the Oak Bluffs Shellfish Constable and an important member of our Advisory Board; along with National Honor Society students at the MV Regional High School.

FOS Scrapbook – Thanks to Suzan Bellincampi, another significant Advisory Board member, and her volunteers at Felix Neck Wildlife Sanctuary, who organized in chronological order more than 15 years of newspaper articles about FOS, State Beach and the Pond. These are now readily accessible in transparencies placed in two blue ring-binder notebooks for reference.

Timothy Hazelton Memorial Kayak Rack – On Monday, July 9th about 25 people including the family and friends of Timothy Hazelton and four FOS Directors were present for the dedication of the Memorial Kayak Rack at the Landing on the Boulevard in Ocean Heights.

Tim's family had thoughtfully suggested to their relatives and friends that if they wished they might make a contribution to FOS in memory of Tim to further our efforts on behalf of the Pond. Our Board decided it would use part of the funds to remember Tim; and after talking with Tim's mother about Tim's love for water sports and the Pond it was felt that a kayak rack on the Town Landing – subject to the approval of the Conservation Commission – would be very appropriate.

As you know for the past two years our Board has been concerned about the impact on the Pond from new development in Ocean Heights. It is our hope that the kayak rack will help the neighbors store their boats in an orderly fashion and encourage all users to police and maintain the beach at the Landing and to carry in and carry out their personal items.

This is a community opportunity for the neighbors to protect this area with hopefully the full support of the Town of Edgartown. This beach is unique and can be a real source of pride for all who live there. What a nice way to remember Tim.

FOS Finances - Our monthly financial statements are always timely prepared by our Vice President and Treasurer, Terry Appenzellar. They reflect a healthy, active organization that operates within its budget in support of its mission. I have often said that no one is indispensable but if there is an exception to the rule it would be Terry.

Directors - Our Directors and Advisory Board members have contributed time, money, expertise and talent to improve and execute our programs, fulfill our mission and create the positive change and progress which has occurred. I congratulate and thank you. I have enjoyed being your President. I look forward to working with each of you as a fellow Board member as we prepare for and pursue our goals in the new year with Jerry McCarthy as our new President.

Sincerely,

Albert H. "Hap" Hamel
September 2007