



Bonnet Shores

Marcel P. Fortin • 792-8252

The first item of business at the Bonnet Shores Fire District Council meeting of Jan. 21 was the appointment of John Caparco of Dunes Road to fill a council vacancy until the election at the annual meeting in June. The vacancy occurred late last year when Councilor Coleman Wholean resigned his position, a resignation that was accepted with regret by many, especially those who worked closely with him over the years.

Next was a presentation by Lisa Fiore representing South County Sand & Gravel Co., which is asking for an easement across a 2-foot strip of land just beyond Allagash Trail so that a sewer line can be laid to the pumping station on Bonnet Point Road. Jeffrey Ceasrine, town engineer, explained that the tie-in is necessary if the company is to seek permits for 27 lots and five commercial lots it owns off Boston Neck and Bonnet View roads. When questioned about the impact this new development may have on Wesquage Pond, Ceasrine said there should be no net increase in stormwater runoff. When asked about the capacity of the pumping station, again he saw no problem: "That pumping station should handle 1,000 homes." Council Chairman Dan Barry observed that since the land in question is now in the Bonnet Shores Land Trust, the matter of the easement must first be referred to the trustees. More on this later.

Wesquage Pond seemed to be the star of the evening, for the next presentation was by two representatives from Save The Bay. Councilor Bill DelGizzo has been in touch with various agencies, seeking information on the condition of the pond and what, if anything, can be done to ensure its viability. Nicole Cromwell and Wenley Ferguson of Save The Bay displayed several aerial photos taken at various times from 1951 to 1992, showing how culverts that previously connected the two ponds have collapsed or disappeared, leaving near-stagnant water. The noticeable rapid growth of Phragmites ("the mighty Phrag-mighties"), the sturdy reed that grows to heights of 8 to 10 feet all along the perimeter of the pond, is a sign of stagnation, filling or runoff of groundwater contaminated with nitrogen from lawn fertilizers and the like. Salinity levels in the pond last October ranged from 3 to 7 parts per thousand, compared from 27 to 28 parts per thousand at Kelly and Bonnet Shores beaches.

The pond, classified as a "brackish water habitat," is recognized by the state Division of Fish and Wildlife as a natural herring run. There was mention of coordinating the manual openings of the breachway to allow for easier passage during spring and fall, and even the possibility of the Fish and Wildlife Service's restocking of the pond if conditions improve. All recommendations will be studied in what we all hope will be a concerted effort to develop a management plan and to ensure the restoration of wildlife in one of Bonnet's most precious resources, Wesquage Pond.

A representative of the Rhode Island Audubon Society, which owns land bordering the larger pond, spoke with me after the meeting and remarked on "how refreshing it is to hear a group of people concerned about habitat quality and restoration."

I liked his choice of words.

"All things are connected . . . Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself." - Chief Seattle.