

2024 BAY AND WATERSHED RESTORATION FUND (BWRP)

RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- **From David Blank , Jr. PhD Ecology and Environmental Science Groton School:** The information on the endangered species is from the Rhode Island Natural History Survey. They do not release the actual species involved as this would invite collection and harassment, but my understanding is that any work proposed would require consultation with the State and the Federal Government to determine the applicability of the jurisdiction. Rhode Island's Endangered Species Act appears to offer little protection to habitats if the species is not listed under the Federal ESA.
- **Dredging will at best be a short term solution with significant impacts to wildlife habitat in Wesquage Pond.** While invasive plant species dominate the system currently, increased disturbance is likely to exacerbate the problem. I hope that any study would quantify expected inflows of sediments during future storms and would predict the rate of flood storage loss in the future.
- Would hope that the analysis of a plan to allow for more rapid drainage of the pond would consider the impacts of the change in water levels, salinity, and temperature on both the native and alien species in the ecosystem.
- Culvert "improvements" that would increase the rate of flow out of the pond might also increase the height of the storm surge. A study of such improvements must consider both effects.
- Sea level rise must be a part of any such analysis, and I would encourage the consultants to consider a range of values for this, including all scenarios described under by the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning and by the NOAA Sea Level Rise studies.

Comments from other Residents

- We all got a lesson about the depth of the pond from the Verdantus staffer during the zoom call on Thursday February 1st. If you dredge the pond to deepen it, the pond will invariably hold more water. But it does nothing to reduce or mitigate flood risk. In fact, it's the *level* of the pond that determines flood risk. And the level is controlled by several key factors, including: (1) the dimensions and elevation of the box culvert at Bonnet Point Road and (2) whether the breachway is open, allowing the water to flow out of the pond. Conclusion: dredging the pond does not = less flooding.
- The key is to ALWAYS keep the breachway flowing (excepting Jun/Jul/Aug). Which is why you and I have exchanged hundreds of texts in the last two years where I would inform you that the pond level was too high. When there is water on the pavement at the big curve on the Causeway, we've already erred by allowing far too much water to collect in the pond. We then find ourselves trying to play catch-up ahead of the next rain event. We've done so at our peril.
- I think we'd all agree that Dr. Black is our resident expert – the author of our Watershed Plan. We would all be well-served to look at his most recent recommendations regarding the

pond. He clearly has concerns about any plan that would dredge the pond, characterizing the idea as “at best a short-term solution with significant impacts on wildlife habitat.”

- Dr. Black is also calling for additional bids as part of our long-term plan. He states, “I hope that the Fire District takes the time to collect bids from competing agencies and to solicit input from knowledgeable residents over the coming months.” He is not alone in the belief that we need to broaden our search for capable firms which can handle a project of this complexity. And of course, as a public body, the Council has a fiduciary responsibility to thoughtfully manage the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. I’m sure you know how news outlets love to call out public bodies who pursue “no-bid” contracts, not to mention potential taxpayer lawsuits. Please, let’s not fall into that trap. DiPrete Engineering is one possibility that Bill DelGizzo has pursued. There must be well over a dozen other state and regional firms who would love to engage on the matter. Some of us would be happy to refer companies to you for your consideration.
- When one carefully reviews the \$200K grant application from back in 2017, the entirety of the money went toward extracting sand from the pond and redepositing the dredge spoils onto the beach. The breakdown was \$150K to dredge the sand, \$25K to spread it, and another \$25K in related costs. All of that sand is now redeposited into the pond. Not even considering the environmental issues to which David Black alludes, do we seriously want to do this again?? If you’re looking to harvest sand for the beach, which I agree is a reasonable objective, aren’t there better ways to do so than disturbing our estuary as was done in 2017-18?
- **The Audubon Society has an easement on Wedquage Pond** that states “There shall be no manipulation or alteration of natural water courses, marshes, wooded swamps or other bodies of water or activities or uses detrimental to water purity. The general topography of the Property shall be maintained in its present condition and **there shall be no mining or quarrying or removal or storage of any surface or sub—surface materials except upon the prior written consent of the Grantee [Audubon Society].**
- I have been following the emails regarding the proposal - scope of work- time frame for filling to obtain a grant. I totally agree with the email sent from Lloyd Albert on 1/31/2024.
- He is right on target and I totally agree that the Council has to reevaluate the entire process on how to develop a comprehensive plan that will address all the challenges and issues we face.
- I don’t think the Council realizes the process and magnitude of research and engineering that is required. This project is intended to correct and solve our current issues for many years and not another quick fix that will be back on the table in a few years.
- Different opinions from all who are affected is needed. I found the [zoom] meeting informative but most of the information I feel cannot be corrected to help our problem and situation at the beach way.
- I agree with all of Mr. Alberts concerns, it is a maintenance problem that we are facing, I do not agree with some of the proposals the engineers were showing I have no idea how they could accomplish what they are considering. I also agree with Mr. Kaufman's concerns. I live next to the bridge way, I watch storms and wave action during the storms. Breachway and Beach club pit are the two points of the least resistance is where sand and water from the storm ends up

and continues to flood Adjacent areas surrounding it. Beach is U-shaped so water during storms come and cannot go back out to sea tides are higher so things end up inland. How do we stop this if top of waves at times 3 foot higher than the road. They should definitely be more meetings and discussions on this topic before engaging in design.