Salt Marsh Enhancement in the Salt Ponds
by Caitlin Chaffe, RI Coastal Resources Management Council
March 30, 2015 -- Charlestown, Rhode Island

Readers will remember from the Summer 2014 issue of this newsletter that the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) was awarded $3.25 million in Hurricane Sandy Resiliency funds from the Department of the Interior for a coastal resiliency project developed in partnership with the Salt Ponds Coalition, the Towns of Charlestown and Westerly, Save The Bay, RI Dept. of Environmental Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Since then, the project team has been working on the first phase, which will involve the design, permitting and implementation of a dredging and salt marsh enhancement project in Ninigret Pond.

Thanks to field work that has been completed over the last two years by Save The Bay as part of their RI Salt Marsh Assessment (RISMA) effort, we have a lot of information about the current condition of the salt marshes within the salt ponds. Like most of the salt marshes throughout the state and region, they are showing significant signs of stress. Areas that were once densely covered with healthy marsh grasses contain stunted or dying vegetation, and in some cases, shallow pools covered in thick mats of algae. In some places, existing pools have expanded in size as the vegetation on their edges has become stressed and died off. The marsh surface

SPC’s 30th Anniversary

This year SPC will be turning 30! We are excited to see what this year brings. We will continue our annual water quality monitoring, and do what we can to protect and enhance the health of the ponds. As always, we will have a busy summer schedule of salt pond safaris, kayak trips, and speakers. Check out the Calendar of Events in this issue for more information. We hope to see you this summer and celebrate! And THANK YOU. Truly, without your help and support, SPC wouldn’t be what it is today.

A Big THANK YOU to our Pond Watchers

As our 2015 water sampling season approaches, SPC would like to say a big THANK YOU to all of our water quality monitors from 2014. It takes a lot of dedication to monitor our ponds every other Wednesday, and we appreciate your enthusiasm.

There are three water samplers that we will miss as part of our team this year, and would like to give a special Thank You: Goody Lovvoll, Tom Dodd, and Laura Moehrke. Goody sampled at Crawford Dock in Ninigret Pond for 15 years and has been a long time member of SPC. Tom sampled at both Harmonic Buoy and Judge’s Rock in Quonochontaug Pond for 15 years, and his garage served as the laboratory for the Quonnie samples for all those years. Laura sampled at the Teal Road site in Green Hill Pond for four years. We can’t thank you enough for your dedication.

We are excited for the 2015 season, and our pond watchers include: Barbara Engel (Volunteer Coordinator), Susan Carr, Ken Simmons, Peter Gaffey, Bruce Loeckler, John Crandall, Chris Randall, Richard and Denise Mulcahey, Pam Ganz, Kim Meneo, Dick Sartor, Ritchie Caldon, Louise Nicolosi, Ralph Minopoli, Don Rocheleau, Richard Sisson, George Hill, Ray Gradale, Ted Truslow, Bernie Forand, John Shusarski, Nikki Vannasse, Adam Roman, Elise Torello, Paul and Kim Hooper, Rachel Dahl, and Margaret Hayden.
Message From Our President

Dear Members,

When I looked over my letter from last year, I noticed I complained about last year’s winter. That was nothing compared to this winter! I can only compare it to my prep-school and college days in Maine, but at least I could ski!

Despite the weather, we have been trudging along, and accomplishing a lot. We have been re-designated as the Watershed Council for the Salt Ponds Watershed by the Rhode Island Rivers Council for another five years. This continues our recognition of status in addressing regulatory issues.

Alicia has been meeting with education professionals as we develop our outreach to the youth. She is working with both a public and a private school to develop programs both in the classroom and field.

As of this writing, contracts have been signed and an engineering firm hired to begin work on the Post-Sandy saltmarsh restoration work in Ninigret Pond. Planning is underway for permitting and planning for similar work in Quonnie and Winnapaug Ponds. I have worked with a URI landscape architecture class who will be developing a design for rebuilding the Quonochontaug Breachway Fishermen's Access. Engaging these enthusiastic students will not only bring young creative ideas, but will save the taxpayers money in design costs.

This year will be the thirtieth year of our Pond Watcher program, which began the Salt Ponds Coalition. I thank our current and past Pond Watchers for their service over these years. The value of their data grows over time. It is one of the longest and oldest data sets available to researchers and regulators in the state. There are over seventy past and present Pond Watchers who have served. I would like to personally thank our good friend and Pam’s lab partner Gudmun (Goody) Lovvvoll for over 15 years of service. His health no longer allows him to collect the samples, but he promises to come over to help with the chlorophyll analysis!

It is extremely sad to report the passing of two of our leaders, Dave Monk and Richie Hosp. Without these two guys SPC would never be what it is today. We thank both Martha and Joann for remembering SPC in memorial donations.

We are looking forward to an active 2015 season. The Seaside Safari program will be ramped up; there will be at least two guided kayak trips, the Pizza fundraiser extravaganza, and a thirtieth anniversary celebration planned. As always, we are looking for volunteers to help out with all these programs. Call Alicia if you can help with these events. An important part of our office rent is providing volunteer service to the Kettle Pond Center. If you can help by manning the information desk, it would be appreciated—of course training is provided.

As always, thank you all for your support of Salt Ponds Coalition. Please recommend us to your neighbors to join. We are very much in need of member representatives from the Narragansett and South Kingstown area. In order to better serve and protect Point Judith and Potter Pond, we need eyes and volunteers.

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Rhode Island Rivers Council and the Rhode Island Water Resources Board are sponsors of SPC’s water quality monitoring program.
In Memorial

by Art Ganz

SPC lost two of its leaders. They will be truly missed, but always remembered.

Richard Hosp

We all lost a great friend in Rich Hosp

Rich spent summers of his youth enjoying Quonochontaug Pond. Upon retirement he and Martha moved to the family property fulltime. Ninigret Landing is one of the most wonderful pond-front properties along our south coast, a peninsula with panoramic views and deepwater access. It was here that Rich learned about the pond and developed a deep appreciation and commitment for the protection of the pond and its resources.

Over the years Rich served on many conservation groups. I believe that there has been a Hosp on the Board of Nope’s Island Association for generations. During his term on the Charlestown Town Council, Rich brought together a rather large group of people with expertise relative to the salt ponds ecosystem. He moderated the group and facilitated its recommendations to educate citizens and regulators on subjects critical for salt pond protection. Under his leadership, the town Waste Water Management Commission engaged RIDEM in discussion to take a more practical approach to addressing wastewater regulations. Several educational pieces were written and distributed to advise landowners of proper lawn and landscape practices to reduce nutrient contamination in the salt ponds. The resident Canada goose management was brought to fruition. Rich’s crowning achievement was his ad-hoc committee that secured funding for the maintenance of Charlestown Breachway. Before that was started he convinced the Town of Charlestown to establish an annual budget item to support a local trust fund to secure local matching funds for regular breachway maintenance. Getting the breachway dredged was no small order. He and others worked with CRMC to get the job funded and accomplished. After that, he set in motion the permitting process for a ten-year maintenance program to allow Charlestown, through CRMC to routinely maintain the channels. He was always passionate about correcting Quonnie Breachway and Weekapaug Breachway as well. Today, thanks to his leadership we have funds in place to complete the Charlestown maintenance and develop plans for similar work on the other two breachways. Unfortunately he will not see its completion.

We thank Martha for requesting memorial donations in Rich’s name be given to SPC and we are grateful for those donations which will help allow us to bring his dreams to fruition.

We are incredibly grateful to Rich and Martha for their leadership, passion and dedication to the place he loved. We will miss him.

David Monk

Salt Ponds Coalition Founder Dies

Dave Monk passed away at his home in the Berkshires. Dave & Joann lived in Quonnie for many years before moving north. He was one of the founders of Salt Ponds Coalition and served for many years as its President and Executive Director. For many years Dave was the face and personification of SPC. It was during his tenure that the Pond Watcher program merged with other small community watchdog groups to form the Salt Ponds Coalition. Dave was an active birder and belonged to several groups. We certainly wouldn’t have SPC as we know it today without the leadership and stewardship of Dave Monk. With Dave’s example and enthusiasm, Salt Ponds Coalition has grown to the strong and healthy organization it is today. He would be proud!

I wish to thank Joann and the family for remembering Salt Ponds Coalition with memorial donations and those who remembered Dave.
URI researchers study how people use RI’s salt ponds and what they think about shellfish aquaculture

by Maria Vasta and Dr. Tracey Dalton, University of Rhode Island

For the past year, URI Professors Tracey Dalton, Rob Thompson, and Jim Opaluch have been working with a team of graduate and undergraduate students and collaborators at RI DEM and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) Policy Center on two research projects examining human activities in RI’s coastal waters. These projects, conducted as part of the RI Shellfish Management Plan, will help coastal managers and other stakeholders better understand how different uses interact in RI waters.

Project 1: Last summer, Dr. Thompson initiated a project to map human activities in RI’s salt ponds. To better understand where, and why people use these coastal waters, researchers used a combination of boat-based observations and land-based interviews. For the boat-based observations, the team spent 30 randomly-selected days on three ponds (Ninigret, Quonochontaug, and Point Judith Ponds). They followed pre-determined transect lines on-board a RI DEM boat and used laser range finder binoculars and a hand-held GPS to record where and when different activities were taking place. Each observation of a kayaker, clammer, recreational boater, or any other user was captured as a point on a map of the ponds. By compiling and analyzing the points, researchers will better understand how people are using the salt ponds and how they are interacting in space and time. The land-based interviews allowed researchers to directly interact with salt pond users to establish where, how, and why they use the ponds. Participants in the interviews were asked to draw on a paper map the places where they spent the most time on their visit, the activities they participated in, and the areas they chose to avoid. This research will continue throughout this summer.

Project 2: The other project, led by Dr. Dalton, is a mail survey investigating public perceptions of shellfish aquaculture in RI’s coastal waters. The mail survey, which will be sent out across RI in the late spring 2015, will ask survey respondents how they use RI’s coastal waters, what they think and know about shellfish aquaculture in general, and their opinions on different levels of aquaculture in RI’s coastal waters. Through this study, researchers will begin to understand why people support or oppose aquaculture and what levels of shellfish aquaculture are most acceptable to Rhode Islanders.

So keep your eyes open for the URI and RI DEM research team on and around the salt ponds this summer, and if you receive a mail survey about shellfish aquaculture please fill it out and send it back in the envelope provided with the survey. If you have any questions about either of these research projects, please contact Dr. Robert Thompson (rob@uri.edu or 401-874-2596) or Dr. Tracey Dalton (dalton@uri.edu or 401-874-2434). For the latest project updates, visit http://web.uri.edu/dalton/salt-ponds/.

Revisiting the Green Hill Initiative

Water quality problems have plagued Green Hill Pond for decades. High bacteria levels and excessive nutrient enrichment have resulted in both shellfishing and swimming bans. Research initiated by the Salt Ponds Coalition, URI, RIDEM and others has revealed the causes of contamination. The Horsley-Witten report of 2007, sponsored by USEPA, identified sources and recommended methods of remediation. The estimated cost to correct these problems is high. Town officials in South Kingstown dismissed the findings as too expensive, both to the town and to individual homeowners. The Town of Charlestown, which only covers about ¼ of the pond waterfront, has begun to address road drainage and other municipal issues.

The Green Hill Pond water quality issue has been on the back burner for a while, and it is time for Green Hill residents and property owners to work together to address them. In the up-coming months we will be energizing efforts to improve Green Hill Pond. In recent years, a Charlestown group under the guidance of the late Rich Hosp, gained local support to address issues in Ninigret and Quonochontaug Ponds. This group, with no official standing, gathered enough support to maintain Charlestown Breachway, provide vital information on lawn care in the coastal zone, effect resident Canada goose population control and address drainage projects along Charlestown Beach Road. If this can process can be successful in Charlestown, it can work in Green Hill and in other neighborhoods on the Salt Ponds. Groups in these neighborhoods should get together to advise towns on how issues concerning the Salt Ponds can be addressed. Local support is key. Towns of Narragansett, South Kingstown and Westerly each have distinct villages and communities all expecting that their issues take precedence; the squeaky wheel gets addressed first. Residents in Green Hill, Potter Pond, Point Judith and Winnapaug have the opportunity to work closely with Salt Ponds Coalition to protect our ponds.

In the coming months Mary-Gail Smith will be meeting with community leaders, government officials and scientists. She will be organizing meetings for those interested in cleaning up Green Hill Pond.
Salt Marsh Enhancement in the Salt Ponds, continued.

itself is less stable as the root systems that give structure to the underlying peat layer begin to break down and decompose. These changes have been happening at a relatively quick pace and are thought to be the result of increased rates of sea level rise due to climate change. Salt marsh vegetation is adapted to being flooded on a regular basis. However as sea levels rise more water gets on to the marsh during high tide and does not drain off the marsh surface as well during low tide. This prolonged flooding begins to affect the plants, which become stunted and eventually die. When the vegetation dies off, the marsh substrate itself begins to break down and subside or sink, causing even more water to become trapped on the marsh surface. The resulting open water areas are typically very shallow and therefore get very warm and have high salinities during the hot summer months, making them unsuitable for fish—but unfortunately quite suitable for mosquito larvae. They often also become covered with thick mats of filamentous algae which thrive on the nutrients released by the decomposing vegetation.

One way to address this problem is to raise the surface elevation of the marsh slightly in these degraded areas by placing sediment on the surface so that vegetation can take hold again. Often this is done by dredging material from a nearby channel or waterway and discharging it onto the marsh. This type of project has been successful in restoring marsh vegetation in places such as Jamaica Bay, New York within the Gateway National Recreation Area. In Ninigret Pond there is an area within the breachway that has been permitted to be dredged on a regular basis. It just so happens that this basin is located right next to an area of marsh owned by the RI Department of Environmental Management that is showing signs of degradation due to sea level rise. The project team saw this as an ideal opportunity to implement a marsh enhancement project. Material will be dredged from the channel and placed onto the marsh to the west of the breachway. The trick will be creating the right elevations on the marsh. We want to raise the marsh surface elevation enough so that salt marsh vegetation can thrive, but we want to keep the elevations low enough that we don’t create upland or Phragmites stands.

Luckily, thanks to the Town of Charlestown’s GIS Coordinator, Steve McCandless, we have very good elevation data for the marsh. This past summer and fall, Steve was regularly out on the marsh collecting very precise RTK (Real Time Kinematic) elevation points. This information along with vegetation, soils and other field data will help the project team set target elevations, and create a final design for the restoration project. We will be collecting additional data and setting up our monitoring program this spring and summer. We hope to have the project permitted and a final design completed so that work can begin this November. The dredging and marsh work will happen in late fall and early winter to minimize impacts to plant and animal life.

At the same time that all of this is going on in Ninigret Pond we will also be looking at Quonochontaug Pond, and gathering information to design and permit a similar restoration project there. The hope is to create a “shovel ready” project for Quonnie that could be implemented if funds become available.

Stay tuned for more information as these projects progress. For more information, contact Caitlin Chaffee at CRMC (cchaffee@crmc.ri.gov). Editor’s Note: Caitlin will be SPC’s 2015 Annual Meeting Speaker, see page 9 for more details.

SPC Works with URI Landscape Architecture Studio to Re-design the Quonochontaug Breachway Fisherman’s Access

SPC partnered with URI Landscape Architecture Professor Richard Sheridan and the URI Coastal Resources Center to mentor the Junior Landscape Architecture Studio this semester, and focused on a project at the Quonochontaug Breachway in Charlestown. The project goal was to redesign and restore the eastern side of the breachway utilizing sand dredged from the Quonochontaug Breachway in the future. The site has deteriorated over the years because it is prone to flooding, erosion, and threats from storm surge and sea level rise. However it is an important area and highly used during the summer as it is the only public access route into the pond.

Art met with the students several time throughout the process both at the university and in the field at the site itself. This was key to the process as it allowed the students insight into what the area is used for, and the challenges it is facing. Caitlin Chaffee of RI CRMC was also on hand to help the students learn what would be permissible under their regulations. Students also used online tools such as Beach SAMP created and CRMC adopted SLAMM maps to create their designs.

In April, the students presented their multifunctional schematic designs for parking, fishing, beaching and other recreational activities to a diverse audience which included representatives from URI, CRMC, and various environmental groups like SPC.
A Tale of Two Ponds: Winnapaug and Quonochontaug Ponds (2013 Data)

In our ongoing “Tale of Two Ponds” series, we keep you up to date on our water quality monitoring results two ponds at a time. In this installment, we will have a look at Winnapaug and Quonochontaug Ponds.

As described in previous Tidal Pages, water quality results are presented as Aquatic Health Indices (AHI). The AHI scores water quality results on a scale of 0 to 100, like a school report card. For AHIs, a score of less than 35 is poor and a score of greater than 65 is good. AHIs are calculated and summarized at three levels: for each testing parameter (dissolved oxygen (DO), chlorophyll-a, dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN), total organic nitrogen (TON), and Secchi depth (a measure of water clarity), for each site, and for each pond (Figure 1). We produce a one-page report for each pond showing a table of AHI values and a map with symbols for each AHI score (Figure 2). These reports are available on our web site: www.saltpondscoalition.org. There you will also find more detailed data reports for each sampling site and parameter.

Figure 3 is a plot of average AHI values for Winnapaug Pond, where SPC is currently monitoring two sites: Southwest Corner and East Basin. The overall AHI score for Winnapaug Pond was 70.5 or Good. The score for the Southwest Corner site improved slightly over its 2012 scores by two points – an AHI score of 61 in 2012 to 63 in 2013. The score for the East Basin site decreased slightly from its 2012 scores by three points – an AHI score of 81 in 2012 to 78 in 2013. At the Southwest Corner site, the overall trend in water quality shows a positive increase, as indicated by the trendline (moderate fit to the data, $r^2 = 0.47$). The AHI scores at East Basin site were too variable from year to year to determine trends, and it has only been sampled for the past four years so it is still a relatively young site.

At both sites the Chlorophyll-A scores went down in 2013 as compared to 2012. In 2012, the AHI scores for Chlorophyll-A were both Good, however in 2013, the score at the Southwest Corner dropped dramatically to Poor and at the East Basin dropped to Fair+. However, the DIN scores at both sites improved since 2012.

Figure 4 is a plot of average AHI values for Quonochontaug Pond, where SPC is currently monitoring four sites: Harmonic Cove Buoy, Harmonic Cove Channel, Judge’s

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**Legend:**
- **Good**
- **Fair**
- **Poor**

**AHI Calculations:**
- **Dissolved Oxygen (DO)**
- **Chlorophyll-a**
- **Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN)**
- **Total Organic Nitrogen (TON)**

**Sites:**
- Southwest Corner
- East Basin

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**Figure 1:** Overall score for the pond: Quonochontaug Pond

**Figure 2:** Score for each site: Harmonic Cove Buoy, Harmonic Cove Channel, Judge’s Rock, N. of Bill’s Island

**Figure 3:** Winnapaug Pond Average AHI

**Figure 4:** Aquatic Health of Quonochontaug and Winnapaug Ponds June through October 2013
Rock, and North of Bill’s Island. The overall AHI score for Quonochontaug Pond was 71.3, or Good. At three of the sites: Harmonic Cove Buoy, Judge’s Rock, and North of Bill’s Island, there was an improvement in the AHI score. The most dramatic change was at Harmonic Cove Buoy with a seventeen point improvement. Harmonic Cove Channel’s score, on the other hand, slightly decreased from last year by three points from 68 to 65. The AHI scores at the four sites were too variable from year to year to determine trends.

The Chlorophyll-A scores remained Good in 2013, except in Harmonic Cove Channel where they decreased to Fair+. There was improvement in DIN scores at all sites except at Harmonic Cove Channel which remained at Fair-.

Our “Tale of Two Ponds” articles paint a “big-picture” view of water quality in the ponds. Please see our Status and Trends report and individual one-page reports for each site and parameter, all available on our website, for a more detailed picture of pond health. We expect data from the 2014 sampling season to be published shortly, and as soon as we have it, we will publish it on our website.

Rhode Island Beach SAMP Launches STORMTOOLS

At the January 2015 Beach SAMP Meeting, a new online tool was debuted called STORMTOOLS. This tool will make Rhode Island more resilient in the face of future storms like hurricanes which often lead to storm surge and intense flooding. Each map is designed to show different sea level rise scenarios based on historical storm data. They allow the user to see what local infrastructure and private homes are vulnerable to projections of 1-foot, 3-feet, and 5-feet of sea level rise, as well as the compounded impact of storm surges at these levels.

These maps which can be accessed by anyone online illustrate inundation levels of storms with various return periods, which is the likelihood of a storm happening again. Storms are categorized as 10, 25, 50, or 100 year storms. Thus a 25 year storm has a one in 25 chance of happening in any given year. This storm information can also be coupled with one, two, three, or five foot sea level rise scenarios. The resulting maps use shading to depict different levels of projected flooding, and a user can look at Rhode Island as a whole or focus on individual properties.

The program can be accessed on the Rhode Island Shoreline Change SAMP website at http://www.beachsamp.org/resources/stormtools/. There are links to both Flood Extent Maps and Flooding Depth Maps. And there are a multitude of both types to choose from. Also available on the site are maps which show the level of flooding during notable historical storms in Rhode Island such as the hurricanes of 1938 and 1954.

The long term goal of this project is to allow Rhode Islanders to prepare for the long term effects of climate change. These maps have important implications for municipal function as they allow community planners and citizens what areas may be cut off from emergency services in the event of extreme flooding, as well as what evacuation routes may become inaccessible leaving people stranded. It would also allow planners to see what facilities would be affected by major storm events such as schools and hospitals. These maps mean that Rhode Islanders no longer have to solely rely on FEMA maps when planning their community. FEMA maps are not updated frequently, nor do they take sea level rise into account.

Rhode Island may be one of the most vulnerable states to coastal flooding in New England; STORMTOOLS is a step in the right direction to manage this issue in the future.

The above image shows the flooding of the areas surrounding Ninigret and Quonochontaug Ponds during the Hurricane of 1938, one of the most powerful and deadly storms to hit New England in recent history.
An Aquaculture Update

by Art Ganz

Since most all of our winter has been spent addressing a multitude of proposals for expanding private aquaculture leases throughout the ponds, I will take some time to describe where we are and how things currently stand.

Salt Ponds Coalition (SPC) consistently has supported aquaculture leases in the ponds as long as they are properly sited and operated. We recognize that throughout history the salt ponds have been used and enjoyed by many people for a variety of activities from subsistence fishing to pure recreation. The difficulty for us is to reach equilibrium between competing uses in small, shallow coastal lagoons. Many of the activities like swimming, shellfishing, fishing, sailing, kayaking and motor boating are done throughout the ponds using a large area for a relatively short amount of time. Aquaculture requires exclusive use of a specific acreage over a long time period with appropriate gear in the water for culture. Placement of these exclusive use areas needs to be located where existing uses will not be excluded or compromised. Public access must be preserved.

CRMC has determined that up to 5% of the geometric pond area will be allocated for aquaculture, with no real differentiation for water depth or other factors except for eelgrass beds. Despite objections from some of the towns and SPC, the 5% is non-negotiable.

Since October, ten proposals have been presented for aquaculture in the salt ponds. The timing of these applications and related public hearings often occurs when many of the near-shore property owners are away from southern Rhode Island and not available to participate directly in the public process. Local groups, including SPC, will generally step in to represent local interests.

We are pleased to report that the Town of Charlestown and CRMC have met to discuss mutual concerns relating to aquaculture and are well on their way to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to address aquaculture siting and operation in their town waters. Other towns would be well advised to follow this lead. Charlestown is also updating the town harbor plan, which is routinely approved and renewed by CRMC. A very important element is identifying existing use areas such as fairways, mooring fields, eelgrass beds, recreational shellfishing grounds and access points to the shore. SPC has worked very closely with town officials on this and has gathered similar use data from the Westerly side of Quonochontaug Pond as well.

Following the adoption of the state’s new Shellfish Management Plan (SMP), CRMC and RIDEM along with stakeholder groups are developing a new updated set of aquaculture regulations. We will do our best to keep you apprised of this development.

Currently each aquaculture proposal is being addressed on its individual merits. The applicant makes the initial contact with the CRMC aquaculture coordinator. After discussion, a site predetermination (PD) meeting is set for review by local officials and interested parties. Specific concerns are presented. The aquaculture coordinator then lists the local concerns in a report to the applicant. At that point, hopefully, the applicant will modify his plans to avoid conflicts before submitting a formal application. The formal application is sent out to public notice for 30 days. If significant objections are expressed a public hearing is scheduled before CRMC full council action.

As of this writing SPC has addressed eight of the applications and have made suggested modifications on some, no objection to others and significant objections on four. Three of those were at the PD level and we are waiting to see what adjustments are being made, or even whether the application will be withdrawn. CRMC did approve an expansion permit over the objections of the town and SPC. However, the most contentious elements were eliminated from that permit before approval. SPC has supported an application for a land-based shellfish hatchery on Point Judith Pond, which will be the first such hatchery since DEM operated its scallop hatchery in Jerusalem in the 1970s.

I would like to thank and commend our Executive Director, Alicia, for providing accurate and timely posting of the aquaculture events on our website. Our members are encouraged to keep up with these developments, and even though you are away from the area, you have the opportunity to send comments to CRMC to be on the record.

SPC would like to determine the impact concentrated shellfish aquaculture has on the immediate grow-out area. Dr. Ted Callender and Elise Torello have produced an estimated nitrogen budget showing the impact of nutrient uptake in oyster culture, which is posted on our website. An on-site project is planned for the summer should funding allow.

SPC will continue to monitor the development proposals in the ponds, but we can’t do it alone. We have many people watching the western ponds, but we need better surveillance and vigilance in the South Kingstown and Narragansett waters. Please let us know of your concerns.
Follow Us on Facebook and Sign Up for Emails

The easiest way to keep up to date with all things SPC is to follow us on Facebook. Throughout the summer we will post reminders about our events, as well as other information. Also feel free to post on our wall, we love to hear from those following us!

Also if you aren’t already receiving emails from SPC, please contact Alicia at saltpondscoalition@gmail.com. She will be happy to put you on SPC’s email list. We send periodic emails out about important upcoming events, and issues affecting the ponds.

And as you can see below, we have lots of events planned for this summer. We encourage you to share information about these events with friends, family, and neighbors in the area. We love to spread the word about how amazing our salt ponds are and how we can protect them!

Events: Please visit www.saltpondscoalition.org and click the “Calendar” button for more details!

Kayak/Canoe Trips
Join us for some exploring on the waters of the salt ponds! Please arrive at least 20 minutes before launch time. Paddlers must wear life jackets and provide their own gear. We will reschedule if the weather is unsafe or unpleasant. Call 401-322-3068 or email saltpondscoalition@gmail.com for more information.


Salt Pond Safaris
Introduce the children in your life to the wonders of salt pond critters! For about 1.5 hours, we will use a 30’ seine net to see what we can catch in the shallow waters of Ninigret Pond. We meet at the US Fish & Wildlife Service kayak launch parking lot at the very end of the park road. Take the Ninigret Park exit off US Rt. 1 N, then enter the park from Rt. 1A about 1/4 mile farther on the right. Restroom facilities are available. There is a short walk on a flat trail from the parking lot to the safari site. Safaris are free, but limited to 15 children so we do require advance registration: 401-322-3068 or saltpondscoalition@gmail.com for more info and to register.

Saturday June 27th, 9:50 AM
Saturday July 11th, 9:50 AM
Saturday August 8th, 9:50 AM
Saturday August 22nd, 9:50 AM

Coastal Lawn Care Talk
Soak it Up
Understanding Stormwater, Rain Gardens and Lawn Care

Erin J. Muir of The Figure Ground Studio will discuss how your yard directly impacts your watershed. She will describe the link between rainwater that falls on your property and the waters of Rhode Island. Erin will explain methods to manage your own landscape in a way that is most beneficial to the waterways we all know and love. The talk will include a description of rain gardens and organic lawn care, and how they work sustain a healthy ecosystem. She will also discuss a few of her favorite plants for rain gardens in Rhode Island.

Thursday June 25th, 7 PM
Kettle Pond Visitor Center

Annual Pizza Fundraiser
Our renowned al fresco wood oven pizza fundraiser is always a wonderful evening. The event is hosted by George and Cathy Hill in their beautiful gardens, just a few minutes east of Charlestown Beach Rd. Space is limited for this event and the cost is $50 per ticket.

Thursday July 9th, 5 - 8 PM (Rain date Friday July 10)

This year SPC will have a three part speaker series looking at RI’s changing marshes. First, we will look at sea level rise, then its effect on marshes, and finally what is being done to address this problem.

SPC Speaker Series
Pam Rubinoff of URI Coastal Resources Center and Jim Boyd of CRMC will discuss the changes in our marshes that are occurring due to sea level rise. They will also discuss the recently CRMC adopted SLAMM (Sea Level Affecting Marsh Model) maps which illustrate how the marshes are predicted to change over time.

Monday July 13th, 7 PM
Kettle Pond Visitor Center

Wenley Ferguson of Save the Bay and Suzanne Paton of US FWS will discuss the current conditions of Rhode Island marshes, and methods that are being employed to assess the conditions of and to restore marshes.

Monday July 27th, 7 PM
Kettle Pond Visitor Center

SPC Annual Meeting
Our annual meeting is held on the third Monday in August at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center in Charlestown. Check www.saltpondscoalition.org for more details, this year our speaker will be Caitlin Chaffee of CRMC. She will discuss the upcoming marsh restoration and dredging projects that will be taking place thanks to the Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Funds.

Monday August 17th, 7 PM
Spider Crabs are one of the most recognizable Rhode Island marine water crustaceans; easily identified by their long legs. They are a true crab, and not an arachnid or spider as their name suggests.

- Found from Nova Scotia to the Gulf of Mexico. They are found in a variety of habitats including ocean, bay, and harbor bottoms, and can live in shallow water or at depths exceeding 150 feet.
- Their carapace is round and spiny with nine small spines running down the middle of its back.
- Their shell or carapace can grow up to 4 inches, and their legs can span to about 1 foot in length. While a leg span of one foot may seem big -- the Japanese Spider Crab has a leg span of twelve feet and has a carapace with a 16 inch width!!
- Males tend to be larger than females, and they need to molt in order to grow. When molting, spider crabs will cling to the tops of eel grass near the water’s surface. Eel grass is a very important aquatic plant in the salt pond’s ecosystem.
- Spider Crabs are slow moving, and do not have very strong pincers. Their primary defense against predators like striped bass is camouflage. They will use their pincers to attach bits of shell, algae and seaweed to the tiny hairs that cover their shell -- they are part of a group of crabs known as decorator crabs. When startled they wave their pincers over their head to warn of potential predators.

CONSERVATION FACT: Spider crabs are highly tolerant of pollution. They can live in harbors where there is oil and other pollutants. They can also tolerate low oxygen or eutrophic (waters where there are excess nutrients leading to the growth of a lot of plant life like algae) environments where there are generally few inhabitants.

FUN FACT: Despite the fact that Spider Crabs have the word “spider” in their name, they are not related to spiders in any way. However, the horseshoe crab (which can also be found in the salt ponds) is not a true crab. It is a marine arthropod and closely related to arachnids or spiders!

Puzzle: Spider Crab Edition

Solve the Cryptogram to learn one more fun fact about crabs! See the answer below.

Information from:
- http://www.chesapeakebay.net/fieldguide/critter/common_spider_crab

ANSWER: A group of crabs is called a cast!
Looking for Volunteers of All Ages

Summer is just around the corner, and SPC has a busy calendar of events for both education and outreach.

If you know any college or high school students looking for opportunities to acquire volunteer hours, let them know that SPC is looking for help for the summer season! During the summer we will be hosting both kayak trips and Salt Pond Safaris, as well as a series of speakers on various topics that affect our ponds!

Please contact Alicia at saltpondscoalition@gmail.com for more information.

We need you to renew your membership for 2015! And if you have, thank you!

It is once again time to renew SPC memberships for 2015. If you have already renewed, thank you for your support. If you haven’t yet renewed, let me first sincerely thank you for your previous support, and ask you to please consider renewing again. The vast majority of our income is from membership donations—you truly are the lifeblood of our organization. Thanks to your support, we can continue advocating for our ponds on the state and local levels, add more years of valuable water quality monitoring data to our 30-year database, take dozens of children on fun and educational Salt Pond Safaris, lead kayak trips, and reach out to the public to educate everyone on how to be a good pond neighbor.

Remember that with your renewal of $250 or more, you can choose a SPC hat: khaki (regular or long-bill), red (regular or long-bill), green, coral, pink, or white. Thank you!

Also, we have copies of our children’s book “Salt Pond Sleuths” available for $10, or $12.50 if mailed. It is a great story set on our own salt ponds, filled with science facts and a conservation message. And we have 2.5’ x 4’ map banners of the salt pond region for sale for $20 each.

Lastly, our SPC wine glasses are perfect for drinking your favorite wine or juice. The glasses cost $10 each, six glasses for $50 or a dozen for $100.

Please contact us at (401) 322-3068 or saltpondscoalition@gmail.com if you would like to purchase any of these items. They can be picked up at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center.

Recipients of 2013-2014 Aukerman Scholarship Announced

The University of Rhode Island (URI) Foundation has awarded Abby Aukerman Memorial Scholarship to two students for the 2014-2015 academic year: Michael F. Coppa and Madi Paige Francoeur. Michael is a Marine Affairs Major from North Kingstown, RI and Madi is a Marine Biology Major from West Greenwich, RI. Congratulations to both students!

The Abby Aukerman Scholarship was created by the Aukerman family in memory of Abby, who was born and raised in South Kingstown and graduated from URI in 1998. Abby loved life on the shore of Point Judith Pond and spent summers on and in its waters. She touched many lives and was admired for treating people with kindness and respect.

Abby’s love for the water and the environment was the inspiration for this scholarship, which is awarded annually to two URI undergraduates from South County studying marine-related science. SPC has been a proud sponsor of the Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund since its creation in 2001. Please consider making a gift to this fund when renewing your SPC membership, and thank you!
Thank you for your ongoing support of our work on behalf of the ponds!!!

Salt Ponds Coalition is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Gifts to SPC are tax-deductible.

Please Help Us to Help the Ponds

Please use this form or the card we sent to you in January to renew... and please ask your friends and neighbors to become members, too.

Please make checks payable to Salt Ponds Coalition. SPC memberships are for the current calendar year.

☐ $1000 + Benefactor
☐ $500 - $999 Steward
☐ $250 - $499 Advocate
☐ $150 - $249 Sustaining
☐ $75 - $149 Supporting
☐ $40 - $74 Contributing

Name:
Permanent Address
Town State Zip

Summer Address
Town State Zip

Email
Phone

☐ Check if you would like a hat with your $250+ membership, and circle the color you’d like: khaki khaki long-bill red red long-bill green pink coral white

Our sampling stations cost $600 per season in lab fees alone. Please consider sponsoring a station or banding with a group of neighbors to sponsor a station.

$1000 + Benefactor $500 - $999 Steward $250 - $499 Advocate $150 - $249 Sustaining $75 - $149 Supporting $40 - $74 Contributing

Abby Aukerman Scholarship Fund

Please help us fund this worthwhile scholarship, which helps support a deserving undergraduate student in marine studies at URI. If you would like to make a contribution to the scholarship fund, please use the form above and fill in the amount of your gift at left.